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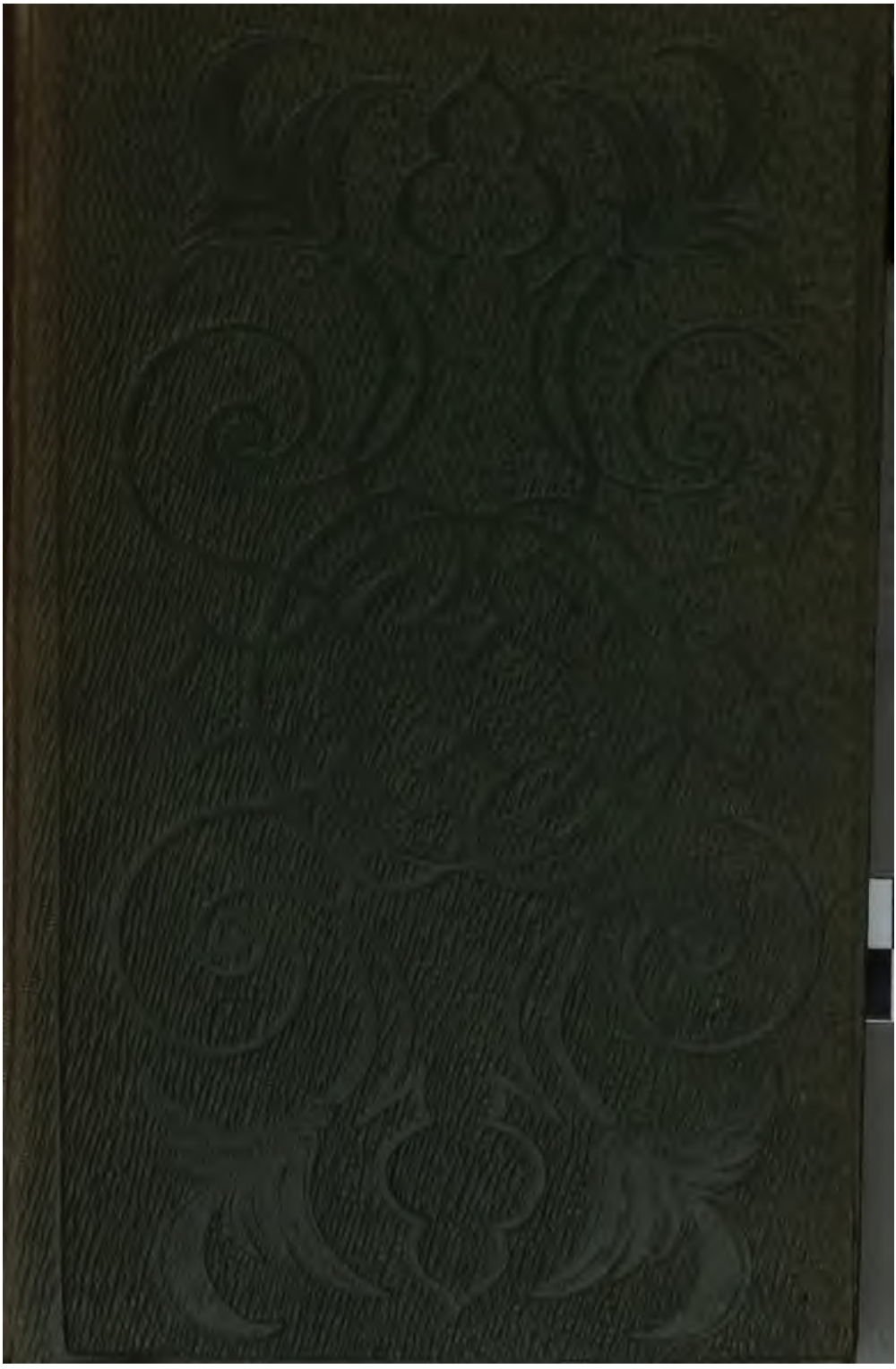

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MATHEW PAXTON.

EDITED

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"JOHN DRAYTON," "AILIEFORD,"

&c., &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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MATHEW PAXTON.

CHAPTER I.

I WAS very busy all the rest of that week, preparing a new lecture and sermon for the Sabbath. Commonly, men in my situation —about to preach for the first time to a regular congregation — just preach to the people one of the discourses they have before read in the Presbytery; but I resolved that I should not do so, I determined to write

new ones altogether. Oh, the weary labour it cost me, committing them to memory after they were written! I was resolute to do without the paper, and after I had learnt page after page, and thought I knew the words so well that I could speak them fluently, I often found that I had forgotten them altogether, when I put the sermon aside and tried myself. I was once or twice nearly despairing of ever being able to preach extemporally, at least on that occasion, when it occurred to me to write down on a slip of paper the chief words of each important sentence. When I had done so, I found it would be a great help, and would enable me much more comfortably to get over that trying day. I stayed at home all the week till the Saturday, to the great delight of my father and mother, who were greatly uplifted, and though both of them very sincerely

pious, not a little vain of their Mathew being at last a regular preacher; and though the place, I was to begin my preaching at, was better than twenty miles across the hills, nothing would satisfy them, but that they should be present, though it was much against my will.

On the Saturday, after an early dinner, I set out on my own pony, and arrived at Hoprig about seven in the evening. Hoprig, I found, was a very wild place, far away from any large village. The Meeting and the Manse stood by themselves, on one side of the road, just where it descended from the hill, on the margin of the lower, though still wild and rugged country, and there was an air of desolation and wild solitude about the place, which was painful to me, and struck a chill upon my heart. The nearest houses were better than half a mile off, and there

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stay at the inn of Craigton all the time I was preaching at the Hoprig Meeting—there was no private house for many miles, where accommodation could be got for the preachers, and the opinion of the country was not at all opposed to the minister's staying there, though an inn is by no means a suitable place for a young preacher to lodge for any time. The Meeting-house and Manse had been suffered to fall into a sad state of disrepair, most discreditable to the last minister, who had appropriated to his own self all the proceeds of the seat-rents and collections, and allowed the Manse especially to fall almost into ruin. He had been compelled to keep the Meeting in rather better order, but the Manse he had not spent a shilling on, during his whole sixty years of residence, and in consequence it was uninhabitable.

Why the Meeting had been built in such

a bleak, desolate place no one could tell; why its early founders had left the cozy, cheerful hamlet, and placed down their building on the bleak and barren moor, by the side of the lonely road, was involved in deep obscurity; it seemed very strange to me that there were not some traditionary reasons handed down among the country people. It might be a freak on the part of the builders—I have seen such like things done in my own time, for no apparent purpose but that of acquiring a very questionable notoriety. I once fancied that the Hoprig architects must have been blind and incapable; now I think, they, like their followers on other moors in the North, in the art of Meeting-house building, were only foolishly ambitious.

I was very well put up in the inn of Craigton; the landlord was one of the

leading men of the Meeting and a very decent man to boot—though he *did* fix himself rather pertinaciously upon me that night. He knew my father very well; and when I told him that he was to be over in the morning, and that I expected a goodly number of the Birdhope Craig people would likewise come, he became a little alarmed, lest, as his house was the only place for miles around, where any refreshments could be had, he should not have provisions enough for those who should need them; he left me therefore, in great haste, to send off a lad on horseback to the nearest village, to buy all the provisions he could procure. It was well he did so, for men hungry with a long ride over the hills, needed substantial refreshments before they returned home again. Having thus disposed of him, I got my sermon carefully read over two or three

times, before I went to bed, in which for hours I could not sleep, my mind was so full of thoughts of the morrow, and with my sermon. I fear that I had the praise of man much more before my eyes, than I should have had, and that it was for that I received the grievous rebuke which was bestowed on me the next day, and I felt I well deserved it.

On the Sabbath morning my father and mother came to the little inn, it was called the "Blue Bell," long before the time for worship. They came in a gig which they had borrowed, and very soon after them John Ogle, and Mr. Jervis likewise arrived on horseback, and with them, and after them, quite a troop of my father's neighbours — for the two congregations joined, though the churches were better than twenty miles apart; numbers of Birdhope Craig

Meeting folk, who lived nearest Hoprig, came also on foot, till I was feared the Meeting-house would not hold them all and the regular congregation too. It was not the best possible preparation for preaching the Gospel, to have so many people coming to hear you, and for the purpose of doing you and your friends honour; and so I felt disturbed and out of sorts, and my attention was distracted not a little. I stole away about half an hour before the rest of the people who had come to the inn, and as I went along with the clerk, under the bright morning sunshine, with all the country cheerful and smiling around, and saw the people in little groups on all the roads and by-paths converging, from among the moors and fields in their Sabbath dresses, upon the Meeting-house, my heart rose again, and I felt a greater buoyancy of spirit than before,

and resolved to be bold and to speak boldly. I forgot the wise caution, "Be bold, be bold—but not too bold."

One of the rooms of the dilapidated Manse was used as a sort of vestry, where the minister officiating could wait, till the people had all assembled; some little articles—a table, a form, and two or three common wooden chairs—had been gathered into it for the convenience of the elders, as well as the minister. It was the custom then to allow from a half to a whole hour for the difference of clocks, and so I had a long time to wait before the usual time for beginning the worship arrived; but alas, I had not that time to myself, much as I needed it, for I was soon beset with elders and others, who came in to see me before the service began, who could speak of the markets and the weather, and compare notes with each other about their sheep and

lambs, but would not on any account allow the conversation to settle down on the more sacred topics befitting the day and the place, and I grew chill again, secularity embracing me very closely, before the time for worship arrived.

At last, with shaking knees and boding heart, I went into the church. The green before it, the road, and even the outbuildings, the stable and byre, belonging to the Manse, were filled with people; half-a-dozen gigs and as many carts were standing on the road-side, in which the farmers around had come to the Meeting. The common stable was filled from end to end that day with horses, and numbers more had been sent forward to the "Blue Bell." I noticed even amid my trepidation, the hosts of dogs which were gathered in little groups with their masters, looking almost as sober and sedate as the

shepherds did, whom they accompanied, and emphatically stamped the character of the congregation as a sheep-feeding one. The people flocked into the church as soon as I had entered, and took their places gravely and seriously, having at the same time an appearance of curious interest, which they did not usually display on ordinary occasions. The Meeting-house had been built during the persecuting times of Charles the Second, it was an oblong building of the plainest and most barn-like appearance, with rude galleries and pews, the floor earthen, and the aspect of the place when empty most bleak, cold, and inhospitable. But this day was bright, the sun shining full on one side of the house, in which there were two very large, and a number of small windows, and on the sunburnt and weather-tanned faces of the great congregation within, gave the whole a cheerful,

pleasant, and earnest look. They were all seated after a short interval, and their canine companions, after a few snarls and short barks, had also comfortably bestowed themselves at their masters' feet below the seats, and I rose to begin the worship.

Our old presbyterian worship is very simple, and is commenced by singing a psalm of praise. I felt a good deal of trepidation when I rose to give it out for the first time, but save that my attention was a little distracted by the sight of my mother in the front of the gallery, and the entrance of some late comers, I did, I fancied, very fairly in the earlier devotional parts, and felt bolder every moment. At last, the time for the lecture arrived—for as we have usually only one diet of worship, in these lonely country Meeting-houses, for the sake of the people, many of whom come half-a-score of miles—

we generally have a double service, of a lecture on a portion of Scripture, and then a sermon on some particular text. I got through my lecture very easily, and, as I fancied, very well, and felt my spirit growing lighter, and my confidence increasing as I went on, and such a load off my mind when I finished it, as I never had felt before. After singing another psalm, I got up again to preach my sermon, on which I had taken so much pains, and that I supposed I knew so well. But, what did I see just as I gave out my text, but an old dog of my father's gravely stalking along the passage, and when it recognized me, it continued its course, with a series of wags of its tail in salutation, up the pulpit stairs, and there as gravely and sedately seated itself on the landing-place at the top, but for the shut door it would have come into the pulpit too, I believe. I sat down for a

moment as the clerk endeavoured to drive him down, but colly would not be so dislodged, he was determined to maintain his position, and so opened on Willie a set of formidable fangs, and uttered a low, angry growl; perceiving this, I rose to my feet again, and desired him to desist, and then I had an opportunity of seeing how the people stood this strange intruder. Their grave, serious faces did not alter in the least at the appearance of this new candidate for ministerial honours, though I saw my mother's face grow flushed, and as if she was in pain, and I was encouraged to go on, which I did fluently enough for a while. At last, when I came to the middle of one of my best paragraphs, my attention was drawn to the dog again, he was sitting composedly on his haunches, following me most intelligently to all appearance, and it caused in me such an

inclination to laugh, that by the effort I was forced to make to repress it, the remembrance of what should come next passed from me altogether, and I was brought to a dead stop. I forced myself to go on, and I did blunder out a few more sentences, my face burning, and the perspiration pouring from my brow in great drops upon the open Bible, but I could not recall, even with the help of the slight notes I had before me, the illustration I wanted and had depended on. At last I grew well-nigh desperate, and deliberately, with a courage I did not believe I had possessed, turned up the written sermon, which most providentially I had put in the middle of the Bible; and when I had looked out the place, I read a few sentences till I got into right trim again, and then as desperately as before, I closed the Bible altogether, and drove right on, my head swimming, the people at

first looking like motes in a sunbeam, for I was scarcely ably to distinguish one countenance. When I had gone on so for a little, I became somewhat cooler, and then I feared the people would set me down as a person who had failed, and to contradict this anticipated verdict, I resolved to show that I did not need paper at all. I found immediate ease and relief from adopting this course, the old ideas I had written flowed upon me, and though I am essentially prosaic, I was able to give some good illustrations which occurred to me at the moment, from the sea and the ships which sail on it, and thus, as the sailors say, I went on with a flowing sheet for a good half-hour longer than the time I at first intended, and what was far better, I saw that I carried the people with me, and that only two or three of the farmers were sleeping. As I concluded the

discourse, I gave a sigh of delight, and felt as if in a new world. But all my difficulties that day were not yet at an end, for after the last prayer and psalm were over, and I had risen to dismiss the people with the apostolic benediction—it is the custom among us from the times of our fathers, to stand, both ministers and people, at all our public prayers, and at the parting blessing in particular—and so, when I rose, I expected all the people to rise also, but on the contrary, they kept their seats, and my hands dropped in amazement. I raised them again, but still there was not any response on the part of the people, and I was wondering greatly what could be the meaning of it, and whether they wanted another sermon—I could have preached for hours, I felt so "i' the vein"—when one of the shepherds just below the pulpit got up, as he saw me still continue to

stand silent and helpless. "It's the dougs, Sir, they aye made a noise, when we raise before, and sae we aye sit now at the blessing," then a glimmering of the truth flashed upon me, and I pronounced the benediction. The sheep-dogs who were with their masters, had learnt that the last rising of the people was the signal of the dismissal of the congregation, and wearied out with their long seat, and anxious to be out to the air again, they had been in the habit of misbehaving when the people rose.

The old colly kept his seat gravely, and was very attentive all throughout the sermon, and was the first to congratulate me when it was over, for as soon as I had resumed my seat, and the people were going away, he lifted his fore paws gravely on to the side of the pulpit, and thrusting his long snout into my hand, plainly declared his satisfaction that all was over, to the great amusement of my

Birdhope Craig friends, as I could easily see. After a little, I descended from the pulpit, and was forced to run the gauntlet of congratulation from the people assembled about the Meeting-house doors, beginning with the precentor, and ending with my own friends, and while the people dispersed—which they took a good while to do—I went back to the room in the Manse to rest for a little; there, one of the elders, a queer little snuffy body, a tailor at Craigton, actually asked me in his most insinuating tone, if I would take a "call," and told me that I had ripped up the Scripture grand. As I returned to the "Blue Bell," whither my parents and friends had preceded me, this old man was my companion, and all the time continued his inquiries and praises.

"Ye did grand the day, Mr. Paxton. Eh, man! if ye wad but take the Meeting, it

wad be a grand thing for us. Here we've been for twae years without a priest, and our auld man preached far ower lang; he was a canny man, and a grand crack, but the folk wearied of him, for he had gotten that frail, puir body, that he forgot himsel, and preached the same things ower again constantly, so that every Sabbath the folk kent before they came what it would be. The house is no very braw, but it'll be repaired, there's a grand garden, and bit grund behint, and the Meeting'll be cleaned, and the seat-rents are no sae bad, and they're weel paid, and ye would double them in ae year a'body says; and I'm sure. Eh, Mr. Paxton! will ye no take a 'call?'"

"It will be time enough to say yes when ye offer me one, William; you did not expect me to say ay at once, did you, and me only preached once."

"Ou, I didna ken, but it's no me, it's the folk, they bade me ask ye. And, Mr. Paxton, you're one of ourselves, and ken us country folk better, nor the preachers that come frae Edinburgh, and ye ken the folk wad not like to run the risk of giving you a 'call,' unless they thought ye wad take it, that's why I askt, and you're faither, honest man, kens us all very weel."

"Well, William, I can say no more just now, than that I would carefully consider the 'call,' if you give it me, and this further, that I know of no other place that I would prefer to Hoprig Meeting at the present time; but I'm to preach to you for a good while to come, and when I finish you'll all know me much better, and if you feel disposed you can give me a 'call' then, and I'll be better able to answer you."

"Eh, I'm glad to hear you're to stay sae

lang, and sae will a' the folk be. I'll tell everybody I see, and I'm gaun as far as Rothbury the morn, so that I'll see a gey wheen. But will ye be gaen hame, or are ye gaun to stay with us all the time?"

"I go home to-night, William, but it is very likely I'll be over again in the middle of the week, and that I'll stay till the end of my time at the 'Blue Bell.' If there be any auld folk or sick folk, that would like to see me, I'll be very glad to call on them, if you or any of the elders only let me know."

"*That* will be grand. I'll see before you come back, Mr. Paxton, and mind, will be for giving you a call. Mind no to listen to ither Meetings. Good-day to you, Mr. Paxton, I'll be looking for you on Wednesday."

And so Willie Sutherland, the elder, turned into his own house, and I went forward to

the "Bell" to my own people. It boots not to repeat the praises of my friends, nor the recital of what they had heard from the people of Hoprig on their way back from the meeting. Suffice it to say, that all were pleased, and that many of the graver folk had really been speaking to my father, about giving me a 'call,' and the young farmers had said the same to John Ogle.

And thus I got over my first public Sabbath, and fairly began my ministry. I was feared then—and when I look back, I am sure now—that I did not begin in a right way —that I undertook that day's duty in a false strength, and that the rebuke I met with, while preaching my sermon, was a direct warning to me, that for the future, I was to confide neither in my own learning, nor eloquence, but in the promised aid of the Spirit of God. I have very seldom since

entered the pulpit in the same state of mind as on that day. I have aye minded what Paul says, " that we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency might appear as of God." Knowing myself to be one of the humblest and most ungainly of those vessels of earth, in which the treasure is contained, I have ever endeavoured to cherish this spirit, and consequently if I have not been an extraordinary minister, I have, at the same time, not been unsuccessful in my ministry.

I cannot help thinking, that my bodily helplessness stood me in good stead on that occasion. People, though they mock at lamiters like me, and jeer us often enough, are yet all the more struck when they hear anything better than ordinary from them. The Hoprig folk compassionated my weakness, and were astonished that I should be

such a "grand preacher." But, at the same time, that was no great praise, for the preachers they had had were mostly "stickit" ones from Scotland, who could not get a kirk there, and thought £80 a-year and a Manse, in England, better than a parish school in Scotland, and so it was no very great credit to beat them.

CHAPTER II.

We all—that is, my father and mother in the gig, and John Ogle, Mr. Jervis and myself on horseback—went home together very comfortably and socially, we riders conversing almost wholly about my prospects of getting Hoprig Meeting, which both my companions, and they knew the country much better than me—thought would be a good place to begin with, but far too cold and poor a place to continue in all my life, as the last minister had done.

"We maun hae ye down the Craig, Mathie," said John Ogle, "when Mr. Wood resigns; it's one of the best Meetings in the country-side, ye ken, and you would be among friends—no that I'll be long there, though, for I have been looking after a farm on the Tankerville estate, down bye in Glendale, and the bargain's near settled—but still, Mathie, the Craig'll aye be like hame to me, and I would like to see you settled in it. If I gang down Tweed, I'll take a wife with me, Mathie, and maybe that'll open a door for you at the Craig more ways than one."

"Indeed, Mathew, John's right," said Mr. Jervis, "we want somebody to preach us rousing sermons. Such blads of cauld morality as we have gotten so lang will not do now; no that I think Mr. Wood preaches unsound doctrine—far from that, but it's aye *do—do*—we never hear much of what we

are to believe, except on a Sacrament. Doctrine is seldom spoken of at the Craig, and I have learnt the Gospel well enough to ken that doing is only a part of what it teaches."

"Hoot, Mr. Jervis," returned John, before I could speak—for I agreed in what he said, and was very glad to hear a man of his age and station, give utterance to such an opinion, while the latter part of what Ogle said had put me into no little confusion, and set my heart a throbbing fiercely. "Hoot, Mr. Jervis, what's made ye think that way? Man, the Testament aye tells us to do our duty, and if we do so, all will be right with us."

"But what is your duty?" said I quietly, "what is your duty to God and to man that the Testament enjoins?"

That was a question which John Ogle

could not answer, and I was sorry after that I had put it to him; for though I am a Northumbrian myself, I must confess that the folk in our district were very ignorant of the Gospel then, whatever they may be now.

"I liked your sermon this day very well, Mathew," said Mr. Jervis hastily, as if to prevent any further exposure of John Ogle's ignorance. "I thought it both sound in doctrine and practical too; take my advice, and aye join them together, for what God hath joined you know men should not sunder; and mind that figures and illustrations tell wonderfully on a country congregation. I was at St. Andrew's for three sessions myself, you know, and I mind one of the professors pointing out to the class the fact, that our Lord's discourses—but you know all about them much better than me—were

always full of figures and parables. Give the folk plenty of them, Mathew, and the plainer the better."

"Yes, I think you're right," said I. "I've noticed, especially in London, where I heard some of the best preachers there is in the world, that those who were most figurative had the best-filled churches, and were the most attentively listened to; but I have not the gift of poetry, and I fear that figures are not my *forte*."

"Dinna say that after this day, Mathie," said John, eager to get into the conversation again. "Yon about a ship chased by an enemy was grand. Did ye get a chase, as ye were coming down from London?"

"No, but the mate told me he had been chased by a French lugger on the voyage up, and been forced to take shelter in Yarmouth Roads close to the guard-ship, and I

minded that, when I was near forgetting all else."

"Eh, Mathie, what garred ye close the book yon way? Man, I thought it was grand," said John. "I was feared, just before, that ye were gaun to stick altogether, I was feared for the honour of the Craig, for ye ken we Craig folk are very clannish, nearly as much so as Mr. Jervis's folk of Fife themselves."

"Ay, Mathew, when I saw you turn up your sermon in the middle of the Bible, I felt your mother's arm shake, shaking as if with palsy. But it was very bold and right of you to do so; it let the people see what stuff you were made of, far better than if ye had repeated your sermon glibly without a stop as you had written it."

"It was all caused by our old Yarrow, poor fellow," I answered. "I could not

stand his coming and sitting down so gravely at my side, and so I forgot my discourse altogether. I could hardly help laughing at his knowing look, and nearly broke down in trying to stifle it. I am very thankful though that I did not laugh—it would have been the ruin of me. I do not call my turning up my sermon the result of courage, or even of prudence, Mr. Jervis, but as much instinct, as that which causes a drowning man to catch at a straw or a twig. The folk did not think badly of me, did they? I was afraid they would."

"No, no, Mathew, those that noticed it thought all the better of you for the courage it showed, and were pleased to see that you had your sermon to refer to. I think you're sure of a call, and John and me will be at your ordination, I feel certain, before the six months are out; you'll see if I am not a

sooth prophet. Mind, we cannot let you stay there. You must either get the Craig, or some other place as good as it, though you'll be all the better of a year or two in Hoprig. But see, your father's ower the hill; we must ride quick, or they'll be home ong before us."

So we rode rapidly forward, and in half an hour overtook the old people, who had stopped at a little roadside inn to water the horse, and to rest for an hour, for there was a long, hilly road before us, and no other place where we could rest, nearer than home. When we started again, I had changed places with my father, for I was beginning to feel tired after so much speaking and excitement, and my mother wanted me beside her; so the horsemen pushed on before us to the Black Hill with my father, gladdening the worthy old man's heart, as I heard

afterwards, by the way they spoke of, and their good wishes for, me. My mother and I jogged on much more quietly, and we had a long and earnest conversation, much more beseeming the solemn Sabbath evening, than that which I could have had with the young men. Now I was pleased to escape their praises and commendations, for I was beginning to grow afraid of such like, even from my mother, for though I must confess I like to be well spoken of, there had come into my remembrance something I once read, though I mind not where. It was the answer that a great preacher gave to one who told him that he had preached a good sermon, and he answered, "that the devil had told him that beforehand." So it was with me. I felt proud of myself, notwithstanding the rebuke I had gotten, and yet I feared having any more praise for at least a time.

"Weel, Mathie, my man," said my mother, "I'm glad and proud to hae you beside me again; are nae ye glad yoursel, that you have gotten this trying day sae weel over your head? I thought I would have fainted, when I saw auld Yarrow gang up yonder. I wondered what ailed the clerk, he could not set him down off the pilpot steps when he could hae dune'd sae easy. But, hinny, I was maist feared for you, when I saw you turning ower the leaves of your sermon, for had ye ance got the name of reading, it would have dune ye ill all your days. The Lord be praised, that ye shut the book, and did so weel after that: I'm very thankful, Mathie, and see that you'll be a faithful minister—I hae nae fear of that *now*. Your faither and me have great reason, and we are baith of us very thankful and proud of you; but, hinny, we maun all be humble,

mind aye my man, that the battle's no to the strong, nor the race to the swift, and seek His strength and guidance that ye may be able for your work."

I poured out my feelings unreservedly into her sympathising ear, and got such good godly counsel from her—even though she now looked up to me as a minister—as has stood me in good stead ever since. My mother was only the wife of a shepherd and sheep farmer, but there were few women, or even men, in the whole country-side, her equals in piety; and for prudence and tact, I never saw her like. As we journeyed on we passed two or three groups of people who had been at Hoprig Meeting that day, but were regular hearers at Birdhope Craig, and we walked slow for a while beside them, out of courtesy. They all touched their hats to me now, and my mother had to ask after

the wives and the bairns, and say how pleased she was to see that they had gone so far to hear her Mathew preach his first sermon, I believe she felt prouder then, when she spoke to these humble shepherds and hinds, and heard their remarks and expressions of gratification, than ever king was when he heard of a victory. These delays hindered us greatly, and it was drawing near to sunset before we reached the house, where my father, and the two young men, who were to be his guests for the night, had arrived long before, and were wearying for us not a little.

We spent a very happy, quiet, Christian Sabbath evening, during which young Mr. Jervis rose as much in my father's opinion as he did in mine, by the communion they had together. John Ogle was thrown a good deal more on my hands than I liked;

he was still, and ever during his life remained my fast friend, and chief resource when I had work to do, as will be seen hereafter, but I must confess that I felt on that night, and often afterwards, greatly ashamed at the ignorance of Divine things he manifested, and still more at the indifference towards them he then displayed. His whole conversation would be about secular things, or about my prospects, or the sermons of the day, and he grew restive and would hardly say more than "ay," or "no," when we conversed generally on those things more suitable for the evening of the Sabbath-day.

We ended the day, as each day was begun and ended in my father's house, with the usual solemn worship—a little more solemn than ordinary on that occasion, and conducted specially by my father himself. I

was deeply moved by his thanksgiving for that day; I saw that I was regarded as the crown of his whole life, and that he had reference to all its varied incidents, in his solemn joy, and I was quite prepared for the use of Jacob's solemn words, when he found Joseph in Egypt: "Now let me die since I have seen thy face," and I was inexpressibly touched, by the earnest and affecting supplications he poured forth, that this day might be the beginning of days to him who had been called to the high work of preaching the Gospel. Inwardly I vowed, as I rose from my knees, that I should try to walk before the Most High in the spirit of this old man's prayer. I heard also that the two young men were greatly affected by his solemn and emphatic "God bless the lads who have this day shared in our joy,

and make them blessings in their day and among their people." The worship that night came nearer in my thought to that of the old patriarchs, than any other that I ever joined in. The faith that produces such men as this, such a Gospel patriarch as this, with faith so clear, and well-defined, and life so correspondent and harmonious, may be reviled and called gloomy, sour, and fanatic; but notwithstanding all the world can say, or do, Calvinism, Augustinism, Paulism, Christianity, for that is its description, has in all ages, since the founding of our religion, produced and will produce such men as that man was.

A solemn awe had fallen on us all, when the worship; and after our supper was over we soon separated, and went to bed in a deeply solemnized yet cheerful and happy

spirit, which John Ogle, years afterwards, when he was the head of a family himself, told me, had first of all caused him to think more deeply and seriously of eternal things, than ever he had done before.

CHAPTER III.

ALTHOUGH I never ceased when I was alone to think of Jane Wood—indeed, the thought of her came perplexingly often to my mind—although she was the very desire of my eyes and heart, and I was burning with impatience to speak out my sentiments to her whenever I was away, I could never make up my mind to go down to the Manse that week; so in order to find occupation, I set out on the Tuesday to Craigton, that

among new faces, and new duties I might be eased. I had always since the Sabbath, an idea that John Ogle must have been very sure before he said what he did, that if he went to the low country he would take a wife with him; and who could that be, after the way he had expressed himself before, but Jane Wood? and then he never would have said that, unless he was sure of her consent. If that was so, I fancied my best plan was not to see Jane at all; if, however, I should get a call to Hoprig, and had heard nothing more of her marriage with John Ogle, I would definitely speak my mind to her.

I stayed at Craigton, and preached at Hoprig Meeting, for a whole month, and during each week visited a large number of sick and infirm, who were unable to come to the Meeting. Before that, I had feared that I should fail sadly in these visitations,

as I had a great dislike to them; but I was so well received everywhere—though I must say the sick people looked on my coming to see them, more as a sentence of condemnation, than as if I brought consolation, for they had been accustomed to no visits of the same nature from the last priest; he never went to see any one that was ill, until Death had set his seal on their brow; and so they fancied when I went to call on them, and to pray with them, that their friends had given up all hope of their recovery, and that they were dying; but as I always spoke kindly and hopefully, and prayed specially for their recovery, if it was the Lord's will, their dread of me soon passed away, and Fame carried on her sounding wings a good report of me throughout the district, so before the month was out, I came to like the visiting very much. I

noticed one thing then, which I could not help contrasting very favourably with the way the people about Coleman Street, and Cripplegate in London, had received me, when I visited them in connection with Dr. Hunter's congregation at London Wall, and that was the mode in which the country people received me. The Londoners would not let me into their houses at all, but stood with the door in their hands, and often, as soon as they heard who I was, and what I wanted, shut it in my face; or if they did admit me, began at once to beg for some pecuniary relief, but in Hoprig, and Craigton it was very different. The first visit I paid was under the guidance of Willie Sutherland, to an old woman who lived with her two sons, in a little hamlet about a mile and a half from the Meeting-house, on the second Sabbath afternoon. The old

woman and her family were overpowered with delight, and though the cottage was a large one for a bondage house, when I took out my Bible to read a chapter with them, they asked me to wait till they should tell the neighbours, and in a little while it was filled. So I came to the conclusion, which the many hundred cases of the same kind has only served to confirm, that if the people were ignorant, they were at least willing to be taught, and a willing mind is a great desideratum to those imparting instruction. I found also that these visits introduced me to a new field of labour, and to a new set of friends, the aged people I mean, who could not come as far as the Meeting-house, and who had no opportunity of hearing the Gospel preached, unless the minister went to them to preach it; and I determined to go with it in my hand to all

the hamlets and farm-steadings in my district, wherever I should be called to labour, and I did so then as I have done all my days since then. I read a chapter, gave a short exposition of part of it in that widow's house, and prayed with the assembled company, and when I left, was followed by the good wishes of all, and by some of the young men, whom I had fairly captivated. I called at two or three more houses that afternoon; and when I turned to go home, my retinue, a regular body-guard, had gradually increased, till I had about a half-score of stalwart men in my train; but alas for the spirituality of the people!—and these men were good samples of the congregation—they had a desire for instruction that was a hopeful feature, but when I spoke to them on more personal questions of religion and morality, I was

greatly distressed to perceive how insensible to the power of religion they were. I believe the chief desire among them was to have a crack with the young priest, for they were all very curious about me. As I pondered over this sad state of matters that night, the remark of the old Popish Mystic came forcibly into my mind: "*Quantumcunque enim proficisse videamur ad extra in bonis spiritualibus, et apparentiis, seu in reputatione sanctitatis, totum inane et parvum est; nisi interior homo fuerit reformatus, et Deo conformis.*" The interior man was not reformed nor conformed to God; these people were not godly persons, though they appeared to have profited by the Gospel a good deal in outward things. It was a good sign, however, to find them willing to, and desirous of, hearing the Gospel; and that in a measure reconciled me to the call, which

they said would be given, and which they were urgent I should accept.

The whole month passed in such occupations, and each day I was really plagued by the people about my acceptance of the call. At the end, they held a meeting among themselves, after worship, on the last Sabbath I was to be there. They were very desirous that I should stay, for they said that if I went away, they would never have a single chance of getting me for their minister, as I would be sent down to the low country, where there were some vacant meetings; so they got a petition to the Presbytery, signed largely, and sent the landlord of the "Blue Bell," and the Clerk of the Meeting-house and Willie Sutherland, to the meeting of the Classis at Alnwick, where the petition was received, and the moderation of a call granted for the Sabbath fortnight, when

Mr. Wood was to preach and moderate in it. I was appointed to continue at Hoprig, but to go to the Craig that day, as Mr. Wood was to preach at my church—for I now regarded it as such. All the people were for me; there was not a voice or a hand lifted against me, at which I rejoiced exceedingly, for had there been a party for some other preacher, it would have made my position much less comfortable.

On the Sabbath after that—it was the first Sabbath of June, I mind—I had a very disagreeable duty to perform; to read the Edict for my own call, namely. The Edict is just an intimation that a member of the Presbytery will preside at a meeting of the congregation, for the purpose of choosing a minister, and it summons all interested to be present on the day and place mentioned. I

felt it very trying to do this; but the distances between the churches were so great, that none of the other ministers could go to Hoprig, and so they put it upon me with a laugh, as Mr. Wood told me, which I thought was not fair.

I went over to Black Hill that week, a few days before the Sabbath, and on the Saturday I went to the Manse very early, to see Mr. Wood, before he went away, and I agreed to stop in the Manse till he came back on the Monday, to keep the lassies company, as he said when he asked me to do so. Ah me! he little thought how willing I was to bide there, and how terribly downcast I was to go away. I cannot, even now, think of that time without feeling somewhat of the old stound at my heart, and the pain I suffered, when the blight of my hopes came upon me. On the Sabbath, I preached very well,

I fancied; the day was a sort of repetition of my first Sabbath at Hoprig, for I was among folk now, who had known me all my days; and there was my old schoolmaster—he used to be clerk, but his singing days were over then, puir man!—sitting opposite me, above the clock, in front of the gallery; and I was almost as much put off my discourses by him, as I had been by old Yarrow before. However, I was now somewhat used to preaching, and, as I said, I got on very well, and the folk were pleased, and told me so, and there was quite a stir among them, that one of their own laddies could preach so well.

In the afternoon, Jane Wood and myself were walking in the garden, and she of her own accord, began to speak of my prospects and about the "call" I was to get at Hoprig; and she told me how pleased they all were,

that I was to be settled so soon, and so near; and then she asked me about the Manse in an anxious tone—she had seen it in the old minister's time, having gone on a visit to his niece, with her father at a Sacrament—whether the folk was going to rebuild it, for it was a wreck. I do not very well know how I answered, for my heart rose to my mouth, when she began to speak of the Manse; I only mind this, that I asked her would she become its mistress? and then I found out at once how simple and foolish I had been. It was not in the nature of that young woman to trifle with anybody's feelings, and so she neither left me nor laughed at me, though what could a poor lamiter like me expect from a braw, gallant lass like Jane Wood? she only looked at me very gravely for a moment, and then said, No, that could never be; and then

as she saw me, Sabbath night as it was, about to speak hastily and very likely foolishly, she continued:

"Mathew, I have said no! and I would have said so any ways; but that you may see I'm in earnest, I'll tell you what everybody fancies, but none knows, that I ken of—I'm about to be married to John Ogle," and as she spoke, she blushed like scarlet, and turned away her head, and then left me hastily, and went into the Manse.

I continued to walk about the garden, in a state little short of distraction, for a while, how long I cannot tell. All along, while this fit of madness continued, I had told myself that I was not a likely person to please, or take the fancy of such as Jane Wood; but the certain refusal that I had received, drove all my boasted philosophy to the winds, and all manner of evil feelings swept through

my mind, specially directed against John Ogle. I had known him since my very earliest recollection; for years, also, I had known that he loved Jane Wood, and long ago, had reasoned myself into the certainty of her becoming his wife; and yet I had been so foolish as to put my lame and ungainly person, and poverty of this world's wealth, in opposition to his tall handsome figure, gay open countenance, and well-stocked farm. I could, I believe, at the first shock, have done some ill to him, had he been near at hand; but I gradually grew calmer, and then a feeling of weariness, and a desire to get away into some place where I could b alone, out of the sight of happiness that I could not share, and which I had deluded myself might be mine; and I found myself gradually drawing nearer, and nearer to the half-mad state in which men lay violent

hands on their lives. My nature is a very passionate one, though my exterior is the most sober and unimpassioned possible, and people who see me now would laugh at the thought that there ever was a time when old Mathew Paxton, of Crookston Meeting, found himself on the very brink of self-destruction; but so it was that Sabbath evening; the sacredness of the day, the near neighbourhood of the place where I had been preaching the Gospel, had not prevented me from offering myself and my *in futuro* Manse to Jane Wood, and neither did they prevent these evil feelings towards John Ogle, nor the thought of sudden self-inflicted death to myself.

The calm, beautiful moon had risen, and was shining brightly into the Manse garden when I awoke, as it were, from this moody reverie, and when I did come to myself, it

was with a start to find myself standing on the brink of such a fearful moral precipice. To know that I had been cherishing such evil thoughts against one that I could not help admiring, as I did, and even for an instant been such a coward, as to admit the thought of a death so sinful, into my mind, grieved me greatly, and I knelt down on the garden-seat, and prayed the Almighty that the purpose of evil to which I had half assented might be forgiven, the sin I had committed be pardoned, and that I might be enabled to bear up against my disappointment, and to acquiesce cheerfully in the arrangements of Providence; and I was answered; for I was able to go into the house, and to meet Jane and her sister quietly, even though my heart did throb and my head ached when I saw her again. I perceived that Anne was surprised at my

long seat in the garden, but she took no notice to me, and I entered into conversation with them both on the sermon and the duties of the day, with a measure of coherence and composure, that astonished myself, for I did not want to show how much I suffered. I saw Jane looking pitifully towards me very often, but neither her nor me took any further notice of what had come to pass.

On the Monday Mr. Wood came home, and brought with him the call which he was to take to the Presbytery at Crookston the next day; he told me that it had been altogether unanimous, everybody had signed it that could do so, and those who could not come to the Meeting that day—for one man at every farm-place must stay at home each Sabbath to attend to the wants of the cattle while the rest are at the kirk—had given the

elders power to sign for them. Mr. Wood showed the call to me; a great roll it was, more than six feet long, all covered with names down to the very end, and he allowed me to take it home with me to show my mother that I was now the elect minister of Hoprig.

At the Presbytery the call was sustained, and my trial discourses prescribed to me; and it was appointed, that I should deliver them in a fortnight, for all the ministers were anxious to have Hoprig filled. So in a fortnight, I appeared before the Classis again, and got through them all satisfactorily, and after another fortnight was ordained minister of Hoprig, to the great joy of the people there—the contentment of the Presbytery—and I was going to say the indifference of myself—but that would be wrong—I was never indifferent about my duty to the people,

yet certainly I did not feel in the same way about having a church and a congregation, as I would have done a few short weeks ago, for the spring of my life appeared to be broken, ever since that fatal Sabbath afternoon at Birdhope Craig.

CHAPTER IV.

I STAYED as minister at Hoprig for one year, and might have remained there all my days, but that the people did not put the Manse in order; and though I got a lodging in a farm-house two miles off, and did not stay at the "Blue Bell" after I was ordained, I wanted to be more comfortable and nearer the Meeting; for to a man like me, walking so far was very fatiguing, and I did not like to saddle my pony for all the distance.

At the end of my year at Hoprig, I was sent by the Classis to dispense the Sacrament at Crookston; the minister of that place had become a wreck, poor man. He was almost as well known for officiating at border marriages at Fairtown, as the tollman at Lambertown himself, and so he had been forced to leave Crookston. The Presbytery had his case in hand, when I was there delivering my trial discourses, but our Classis had no great authority then, nor did it assume much, but though it did not depose him, the people did, for they gave him no peace or rest till he left, and so he did, and went and lived at Fairtown, and got a precarious living by marrying runaways, and very soon all the border marriages of the district were performed by him. I went down to his old church, and with the help of Mr. Ayton, the minister of another meeting-house within

a mile, I got through the day very well, though so far as my assistant was concerned, not very pleasantly; and the people were so pleased with me, that after the Monday's thanksgiving was over, they had a meeting in order to elect me to be their minister.

The meeting of people in the meeting-house on the Monday, though it was seed time, was very large. The house itself was the largest on the Borders, the Manse a very good one, and habitable, and the stipend was one of the best. So as the people were extraordinarily harmonious for Crookston folk—they had the name of being very wild—I could not see it my duty to refuse the call they offered me. My own people at Hoprig were very much enraged when they heard that the Crookston people had called me, and would not at first believe that I

would leave them ; and when I told them from the pulpit, they were as angry, as if they had treated me like a prince all the time I had been with them—when, if the truth be told, not only they left the Manse a ruin, but many of them did not even pay their seat-rents, and I only got fifty pounds for the whole year I was there. The Borderers have a great deal of the old spirit in them still, as I soon found out to my cost ; for though I was a few more Sabbaths with them, many of the people would not come to hear me, and I believe they would have made a "road" on the people of Crookston, as fast as ever their fathers did in the old border days, and all in revenge for their having stolen their priest. The better class of the people, though they were loath to part with me, very unwilling, they said, did not behave so bad, but were favourable, and stood by me till

the last—though I heard that there was some underhand work going on among them, even, for all their fair face to me, to get the meeting-house more into their own hands so that they might get a minister from the Burghers of Scotland, as one of the congregations connected with the Classis did a short while afterwards at Wooler. I could not have believed it possible, that my leaving would have had the effect on the people that it had. Often, after it was known I was going away, when I met people who a few weeks before had been most anxious to be civil and attentive, but now they would turn aside or pass on with stubborn hardened faces in silence, which was very painful to behold, and I was greatly grieved. But I had accepted the Crookston call *bonâ fide*, and not for the sake of lucre or gain, and even if I had not, I would have left Hoprig, for

the place had been distasteful to me from the very day of my election.

There was one man belonging to that congregation, who stood by me in good report and in bad. He was a blacksmith, who said he had greatly profited by my ministry. John Carr had been a wild man, the folk said, and was come of a wild race of smugglers and salmon poachers, who had been the terror of the people down about Norham, and Horncliff on the Tweed. Not that John had not attended the church, and even been a member of the same, but the cold morality which was at that time generally preached, never reached his heart, nor had any influence on his life, as he told me himself. It was only after I came that he felt what he was, and what he needed, and I do believe became and continued even after I left, a real Christian man, marked and

noted among his neighbours for his soundness in the faith, and the purity of his life, though I dare say the same energetic spirit that had made him noted as an evil-doer, now made him as decidedly a leader in the opposite direction. Much had been forgiven to him he felt, and he loved much in consequence. On the last Sabbath I was there, after I had preached a farewell sermon, he came to me.

"I am very sorry you're gaun away, Mr. Paxton," he said. "Oh! how I would have liked ye to stay here, for ye have done great good amang us, though little of it is seen at this moment; even against our wills, I fancy. I'm sure I never heard the Gospel till I heard you; and I may well bless the day ye first came amang us."

"It is a great pleasure to me to hear you say so, John," I answered, "but you must

see that I could not stay here all my days. It would not do, it would have been very wrong of me, to refuse a call from such a numerous people as the Crookston congregation, for the sake of the much smaller one here. The *majus bonum Ecclesiæ* decided me to accept, and the Presbytery to release me. You wonder what that means. It's Latin for the greatest good of the Church, John, and you know that the progress of the Gospel, is what we should always have in view in preference to any feelings of our own. I have mistaken you much, if you do not both think and feel that that is right."

"I ken it weel, Sir, and feel it here; but, Mr. Paxton, is it no sinful to leave a field the fallow ground of which you have broken up, and where you have sown the good seed of the Word, before the harvest time comes, and that, as the folks say—though *I* dinna

believe it, mind—because Crookston is a better stipend?"

"John, John! could you think I would ever leave you for that? No, John, the extra money will be very useful, no doubt, but the congregation is three times as large, and they need fully as much as you a rousing preacher, which they say I am. You have heard of Mr. Cutter, poor man; he has left them in a sad state. And then, John, mind the Scripture: 'One soweth and another reapeth.'"

But John the blacksmith was only half convinced, and I fancy, would hold still that it was the duty of a minister to stay still with his people, however he felt himself, or was treated by them; and I am sorry to say that I partly agree with him, but not altogether, though I did leave Hoprig and go to Crookston.

I had consulted my father before I accepted that call; and after taking time to consider it, he thought, and so did my mother, that I should do so; and all my friends, the minister and people at Birdhope Craig pressed me very hard to agree, and close with it at once. Young John Ogle had gone to his farm down near Wark, and he came up, I heard, unknown to me, and urged my father and Mr. Wood, and the old schoolmaster, who had most influence with me, to get me to yield. Indeed, I am sure John had a great deal to do with my getting the call at first, for he had joined that congregation when he went to his new farm, and his frank, hearty temperament, and genial good-humour, had already made him a great favourite with the leading folk of Crookston. Little did they all know, when they were pressing me so much to go, that I was as clear in my own

mind to leave Hoprig, as it was possible to be, and needed no urging to decide me in the course I should pursue. But it was only decent to take some little time to come to a decision, and not allow the Crookston folk to think I was ready to jump at the call at once; and very thankful afterwards was I that I had taken time, when I came to know the people better I was to live among.

I had another reason for accepting. I have said that Hoprig was distasteful to me from the day of my election to be its minister. It was there that I had passed the most miserable period of my whole life, after that sad day in the Manse yard at Birdhope Craig, and all the places round were associated with the painful mental struggles and trials, which I passed through for months after that time. I could not go out to make

a round of ministerial visits without passing silent witnesses of my anguish. That clump of trees had seen me well-nigh desperate, clenching my fist and like to blaspheme; yon burn had received my tears, when in a more softened mood; and the very stiles I had to cross, and the people I had to see, brought back continually one or other of the many phases of my agony. I took an absolute dislike to Willie Elder, not because of him being the dissipated, worthless body, which after a time I found him to be, but because he was coming continually in contact with me, when I was in this gloomy mood. I thought that, for the health of my mind, my safest plan was to break up all these associations, and in a new field seek quiet and health of spirit again. Had I remembered clearly that Jane Wood would be a member of my new church, I dare

say I should have hesitated longer. It did cause me to delay acceptance, but I allowed myself to speculate on improbable contingencies, which would prevent her becoming John Ogle's wife—to be irrevocably fixed to the Crookston people; and afterwards I judged that it was best to familiarise myself to her as Mrs. Ogle, and that seeing her every Sabbath in the Meeting, and also in her own house would be for my good. And so I went to Crookston.

CHAPTER V.

I AM not going to weary myself, by detailing the ceremonial which attended my induction to the charge of Crookston congregation. It will suffice to say that the Classis met, and, after two of the ministers had preached—for we were all very long-winded at that time—I was inducted very much in the same way as I had been before ordained, only that there was no imposition of hands, Presbyterians, considering that reordination is illegal and unscrip-

tural. I had in both cases to make a confession of faith *vivâ voce*, as is done by the Congregationalists at the present time, for there was no signature of the Confession of Faith of the Westminster Assembly required among us then; and, indeed, I never signed it till some twenty years ago, when our Presbyteries began to be a little more like what they should be. As Crookston was the furthest down meeting-house of our Classis, there were some other ministers from the neighbouring Presbytery present, besides our own, the parish minister at Fairtown in Scotland, Mr. Ayton, whose church at Carton was within a mile of mine, and my old enemy, Mr. James, from Cuthbertstown, on the Tweed, whose appearance surprized me very much. I did not know, at first, whether most to admire his boldness, or to be angry at his

presumption, when I saw the patronizing way in which he came to address me; but unless I am roused I cannot be angry with anybody, and so I took all he said in good part. After the induction was over, and I had been welcomed by the people, they gave us a grand dinner, in a large room at the inn, and there we passed a very pleasant evening. I heard afterwards that when the Presbytery left, the company who remained did not behave themselves so well as they should have done, but that several of them became very uproarious before they separated; as, however, there are always numbers of evil-speakers in such places, I did not know whether to believe these reports or no.

Crookston is situated very pleasantly, on the elevated bank of a deep slow-flowing river, famous in old border histories. Above

and below the village, the higher banks recede considerably from the river, and there are consequently wide haughs of level alluvial land, which the people of that country call hoffs. The river makes a great sweep at the upper end of the village, and the high bank on which it stands approaches close to the brink of the water; while on the other side, opposite this high table-land, the haugh or hoff is like some of the links of Forth, near Stirling—which I went to see in the first steamboat that ever plyed between Leith and that place, a great many years ago—and extends for nearly a mile from the water's brink, till it meets the higher and more firm ground above. I have often, when musing over these appearances, thought that at one time the whole of these haughs must have formed the bed of a lake, and the high ground of Crookston a promontory of

table-land projecting into it, while the banks on each side at Carton, Mr. Ayton's place, formed the gorge through which the water poured. The village of Crookston stands on this table-land, about fifty or sixty feet above the river, gradually ascending from the haughs on either hand, but looking a very precipitous bank, above the stream at the centre. It is a place of no great size, perhaps some sixty or seventy houses, and was then inhabited by a rude, restless, but thriving population. The street bends something like the Australian boomerang, and hence its name the Crooked Town. The meeting-house stands in the centre of the place, and is an exact square, and very large. It cannot claim the same antiquity as my old place at Hoprig, for over the entrance is carved the date, 1745, the year of the Great Rebellion; and it is only a daughter

of the old meeting at Carton, of which Mr. Ayton was then the minister, though both in size and in numbers of hearers, the daughter was twice as great as the mother, for the immense house was filled every Sabbath, and the communicants on Sacrament times were then about one thousand, which is a prodigious number for one man to look after. The Manse is at the eastern end of the village, a little removed from the high road, and has a large garden before it, and a large field or paddock between it and the river at the foot of the bank behind. The people of this village were a rude race then, as I have said; they were mostly carters engaged in carrying coals and lime into Scotland, from the coal-hills and lime-kilns, a mile or two on the other side of the Carr, and consequently—for it seems proverbial that coal-carters should be a wild set—they

were not very well behaved, and gave ample custom to the two public-houses in the village, and to the inn on the post road about a quarter of a mile out of it, too. The great mail road passed just below the end of the "town" on the west, and altogether it was a place—though the coaches going north and south every day, did not pass directly through it, but only along the road at its end—that was very cheery, and within easy reach of the large towns both to the north and south.

In this place I have spent the most important years of my life; and now that I have left it, I cannot help feeling a good deal of pain, when I review the circumstances in which I first entered it as its minister. I am a minister *emeritus* now, and living on a small pension which the congregation and the Church in England gives me; for

we have, I am glad to say, an organized Church in England now of the old true blue Presbyterian kind, and I have forty pounds a year—twenty from the Church and twenty from my old people, of whom I am still styled the minister, though I never see them now. I have also given up the Manse to my successor, and the congregation gives me ten pounds more for that; and though the whole sum is very small, it does for Peggy and me very well. I must say that pleasure is intermixed with the pain, and my thoughts as I write about going there first in the summer of 1808, in the very flower of my strength, and with all my hopes young and fresh—for I had greatly recovered before that, from the melancholy dinnle my heart had gotten in the Manse garden on that moonlight Sabbath evening —are very curiously mingled of these two

opposite elements. Many happy years, and not a few sorrowful hours, did I pass there; and but that I was growing old, and had some striking admonitions, that the time was drawing near, when I should have to pass away hence, and be no more, I would have liked to die there also in my harness, in the pulpit I had filled so long, like a knight of the old time, in the battle-field, or the lists. But such was not to be the case; and so here I am in a town, thirty miles from the place I lived so long, dwelling, Peggy my servant, and me, alone by ourselves, waiting both of us, for she is very little younger than me, and is troubled with serious spasms now and then, for the last summons which shall take us hence for ever, and we shall be no more.

CHAPTER VI.

MR. AYTON at Carton was my nearest neighbour, all the forty years I was at Crookston. Poor man! he has passed to his rest now, after one of the longest ministries I ever heard of. He was about forty-five when I first met him, and had then been twenty years a minister at Carton. Mr. Daniel Ayton, V.D.M., as he wrote himself on his books, and his letters to strangers, was a tall robust man, of considerable strength and power, both mental and phy-

sical. His appearance was on the whole good, though I thought he had ever a miserly look, but perhaps that was only the result in my mind, of what the people had told me of his greedy, mercenary nature, which my own experience afterwards confirmed. His features were large and prominent, his nose aquiline, mouth large with thin lips, his eyes a greenish-grey, like those of a cat, and his cheek-bones very high. I never much liked the look of his face, nor indeed all my life—and we were neighbours for forty years or thereby, as I said—did I ever have much communication with him. He had been educated when religion was at the very lowest ebb in Scotland, that it ever reached during the black days of Moderatism at Edinburgh University, and was far more of a free-thinker than even a moderate in his opinions. On many of the doctrines which

we true Presbyterians hold most stoutly, he was radically unsound, and even heretical; and had the Church been as vigilant then as it is now, he would have been deposed years before. His Gospel was not the grand old Gospel which the Apostles preached, but the milk and water of Moderatism, verging upon, if not altogether being, Socinianism. Before I went to Crookston a year or two, his Classis had wished, and even attempted to investigate, into some particulars of his conduct; but he had withdrawn himself altogether and denied its jurisdiction, and acted—though he called himself a Presbyterian, and boasted that he belonged to the Church of Scotland—entirely as an Independent. Indeed I think by his case, both, if the *fama* was to be believed, and it was a *fama clamosa*, in discipline and doctrine, the fall of so many old Presbyterian churches in Eng-

land into the hands of the Socinians is well illustrated, for had the Classis exercised proper discipline with him, he must have given place to a better man, long before his people became as bad as himself. The first beginning of error is, like the letting out of waters, imperceptible, but gradually increasing till it becomes a torrent. Had Presbytery in England acted constitutionally one hundred and fifty years ago, England would at this day have had a Presbyterian Church, holding the Standard of the Westminster Assembly, worthy of the name, instead of the poor eighty churches of which it now consists, one-half of which, or more, depend on the precarious charity of the others to keep them afloat.

Daniel Ayton, V.D.M., was, however, a man of singularly resolute will and energy, and had become a perfect despot in his own

congregation. I remember looking over some rather interesting records of his church once, and being struck with the gradual way, in which he had possessed himself of the whole power, and become irresponsible. This record showed, that when he came to Carrton there had been a body of trustees, who had acted, and were acting vigorously and well, for the interests of the congregation, and so they continued to do for a few years. But then I saw that their meetings became more irregular, that the accounts, which for more than fifty years before, had been regularly balanced and audited, in a very rough way, it is true, twice a year, and signed by all the trustees and the minister, bore on the face of them only examinations after longer intervals; and then, shortly after, the only signatures to them were those of Mr. Ayton and the clerk, who, I found, was

a tool of his; and at last, some ten years after he came to Carton, they were dispensed with altogether, and the minister of that meeting, became the meeting in his own person, something like Louis le Grand, whose "l'état c'est moi" is proverbial. I found out all this very soon after I was settled at Crookston, and it gave me a key to the character of the man. One day I went down the water to call on him, to return a visit he paid me as soon as I was settled; and we had a long conversation about my congregation, between which and his, there had been a disagreement approaching to a feud ever since the secession of the daughter, though the people lived together as neighbours very harmoniously and friendly, at the various villages and farming hamlets where they dwelt. Mr. Ayton was very anxious that I should follow his example in

Church government, and, I believe, thought that the way he had done and his management there was the best possible.

"Take my counsel, Mr. Paxton," said he, "if you wish ever to be comfortable here. I may as well tell you, that the Crookston folk have never been peaceable since auld Mr. Elder got the Meeting built. I know that, ever since I came to this country-side, there has been some quarrel aye breaking out among them, and the lives of the ministers have been made miserable, as I have seen myself; but if you'll take my advice, you will rule them as I have done the people here, with a firm hand."

"I heard something about the quarrelsomeness of the Crookston folk before I accepted the call," I answered; "but I thought then, and think still, that I'll be able to manage them well enough, without

seeking to be tyrannical or overbearing."

"You have come to troubles made ready to your hand, young man. You'll never have a day's peace, I tell you, unless you get the upper hand at once. Do I not mind how they treated young Mr. Elder, poor, unfortunate, unhappy man! he was the nephew of the man that built the church and Manse. He was put fairly out of his senses with the treatment they gave him, and the way they quarrelled and fought among themselves. He could not do the smallest thing, but some of them were ready to find fault with it. No doubt you've heard before this of his melancholy end; they persecuted him so that at last, poor man, he made away with himself."

"Dear me, Mr. Ayton, did he kill himself? and was it because of the way the

people treated him?" I asked eagerly, for I had never heard of this before.

"I will tell you the whole story. Perhaps it may let you see the character of the people more clearly, and be a lesson to you how to deal with them now that you are their minister. The ultimate dispute was this. Some young lads had taken seats in a pew in the front of the gallery, and when a new farmer came and wanted to take the whole pew, Mr. Elder let it to him at once; for it is usual, as you will be aware, for single sitters to give way whenever a person comes forward to take the whole seat; but these young men would not give it up. Mr. Elder did all he could quietly with them, but without effect. They were obstinate, and would not yield. Well, the minister and the clerk tried to compel them. They put a lock on the door of the pew, and even

nailed it up, but the lads climbed over from the pew behind. At last, he ordered nails to be driven through the seat of the pew, so that nobody could sit in it. But that did not do either, for the ejected sitters brought pieces of wood with them to put on the points of the nails, and took their places every Sabbath as if in bravado. Then the congregation took different sides, the most part against the minister, and they made his life miserable by the way they spoke against him. The Sacrament came on while this quarrel was hottest. I was his only helper that day, and he had been terribly harassed just then by another circumstance which arose out of that disturbance. His wife had taken part against him, and left him no peace even in his study at home. I mind well, after the evening sermon—I preached it—we both of us went down to the Manse,

with some of the elders. Mrs. Elder made a bowl of toddy for us—it was the custom then for the ladies to do so—and then Mr. Elder began felicitating himself on the day having been got over so well, for he had partly expected some interruption or annoyance, so bitter were the people; but then his wife, before us all, broke into the conversation, and said that all had done well that day but himself, and a good deal more of the same kind of thing, which I thought very unfeeling and harsh, especially considering the time and the company. Well, there was a lull during the Sacrament; but on the Monday, when the office-bearers met to settle their accounts for the half-year, there were some hard words among them, and they had spoken very disrespectfully to poor Elder, and so he left the meeting, and would not dine with the office-bearers as usual, nor go

home, but went away down the water-side as if he was coming to me. His wife and her sister saw him from the back windows of the Manse, as for hours he continued to walk about the hoff between Crookston and this, but he never offered to go home, neither did any of them offer to go out to him. But about eleven o'clock that night, I was knocked up by a messenger from Mrs. Elder, requesting me to go up to the Manse, which I did instantly; and as I was going up the hoff, I struck my foot on a hat, which I lifted and carried with me. When I got to the house, I found them all in a state of great alarm and perplexity, and heard then, for the first time, of the absence of Mr. Elder. I had left the hat outside the door, and I was glad that I had done so, for it flashed on my mind at once that it was Mr. Elder's hat. His wife was in a strange

state. I do not think the absence of her husband was the only cause, though it might have aggravated it, no doubt. She was only half-dressed, and spoke in the strangest and most incoherent manner. Her sister, a fine young lady, was living with her at the time, with whom I was very much taken—indeed, I never saw any one that I liked so well as her; and the first thing Mrs. Elder said to me was, that her sister was deeply in love with me, and then she demanded when I was going to marry her; and she went on in the same strain, saying many things very improper for me to hear, and worse for me to repeat, and I saw that the poor woman was deranged in her mind. Very luckily her sister was not in the room with us; and I went out to seek her, and tell her to take care of Mrs. Elder, while I went to seek for the minister. I was glad to get out of the

house, for though I knew not how melancholy the duty I had to perform might be, I could not help feeling that it was more awful to see the loss of reason in the wife, than it would be even to find the dead body of the husband, were my forebodings correct, for I jealoused the worst from what I had seen both on the Sabbath and that night.

"I soon got most of the men of Crookston roused, and set them to search with lanterns all the hedges and ditches about the hoff, and the plantations on the higher bank. I thought—for I heard that he had been sorely crossed that day—that Mr. Elder might have fallen down in a fit, or have seated himself, and fallen asleep. My own clerk, old Hogarth, and myself, went away to examine the place where I had found the hat, which sure enough belonged to my missing friend. We went down to the water-side as

you came to-day, and a little past the end of the glebe, among the trees, where I had found it, we came upon Mr. Elder's coat, which increased our alarm greatly, but we could see nothing of himself, neither among the trees, nor by the water-side. The water is very deep at the Crookston turn, and all the way down to the mill-call just below here, and we could not, with the light of our lanterns, see whether there was anything in the water or not; but after we had searched all that plantation, and just as the day was breaking, I sent Hogarth away down the water for the boat, and stopped myself at the place where alone we had seen any traces of the lost man, till he should come back. He was a long time away, for he had to cry up the boatman, and only got him wakened at last, when my Peggy heard him, and came out of the Manse, and roused him.

Long before the boat came, it was full daylight, and I saw something in the river, just where the root of a tree—it is a curious-looking object in the water still, and you might fancy it like, somewhat, to an alligator in one of rivers of India or South America—is seen under the water at the bend of the stream. I could not for long make out what it was, it looked like a bundle of clothes of some kind; of course, my excited faculties told me at once then, that it was the body of my old friend, but on any other occasion I should only have thought that some beggar had cast his old rags into the river, and that they had become entangled about the tree-root. When the boat came, a considerable number of the searchers, who had found nothing in the plantations on the high bank, and had given up their examination in despair, had gathered round about me, and

we waited in silence—no one doubting what that object was on which all our eyes were fixed. As the boat passed close by the place, one of the oars touched the mysterious object, and then the corpse of the minister of Crookston floated on the surface of the water. I need not weary you with farther details of how the people were affected, or what a dreary home-taking that was, which I had to do with, that morning. It was, perhaps, merciful in the Almighty Being, to take away the wife's reason, at the same time as the husband's reason and life, for certainly she was raging mad, and her sister was very near becoming so too, by reason of the two sorrows. There was an inquest, of course, on the body, and a girl deposed to the strange conduct of Mr. Elder, whom she had met in the afternoon by the water-

side; and the jury brought in a verdict of 'Temporary Insanity.'

"You may be sure I gave up all thoughts of Marion Laidlaw after that. If there was one thing more than another I was feared of, it was being connected with any one who had any hereditary disease, and there could be little doubt, seeing how the one sister was affected, that the other was liable to the same, and so I gave her up entirely.

"Now, Mr. Paxton, all that happened because Mr. Elder did not from the first curb the Crookston people with a firm enough hand. I don't wish to forebode, or forespeak evil—it's always bad enough when it comes—but if you want peace and quietness there, be counselled by me, and put a firm hand on them from the very beginning. If they feel that you do so, they will be all the

better for it, and you yourself will be saved a great deal of impudence from them, and irritation and trouble on your own part. I might tell you how I did, but look over that book, and you will see as clearly; and I'll just go ben to the kitchen to see this man that wants me. It will be about some bairn to be baptized, or something of that kind, I fancy."

So I was left to look over the parchment-bound book, which was a sealed book to all his congregation, and to ruminate over the sad story which he had told me. In the book I picked up all the particulars which I have already set down regarding Mr. Ayton, almost unknown to myself I must say, for the fearful story made me hardly conscious of what I read. It was horrible to think that one of my predecessors had committed suicide, and still more so that it was the

persecution of the people that caused him so to do; but then I could not help thinking, that he himself was very much to blame, very much indeed, according to my notions, for why did he, a minister, allow himself to be mixed up in any squabble about a seat, and still more, why authorize the extreme measures which were taken. I did not think of the great crime he had committed, for my own feelings only a twelvemonth ago rushed into my remembrance, and I felt that a little more would have been apt to cause me to do the like, but the fact that he put it into the power of the people so to aggravate him, I could not understand it at all.

When Mr. Ayton came back, I took my leave, neither refusing his counsel nor taking it altogether, and I went home up along the water-side all the way—though by crossing

the hoff in a straight line, I could have saved a mile. Looking among the reeds, and at the roots of the trees all along the bank, with a half-expectation of seeing some such appearance as Mr. Ayton had seen that morning in the Carr, I marked with a shudder the tree-root where the body of my predecessor had been found, just at the foot of the bank which led to my own Manse; and I wondered, though I had once been tempted nearly to the same point myself, how any minister of the Gospel could be so far left to himself, whatever the provocation was, as to cast himself thus hopelessly into the river. I reached the Manse at last, not in the best frame of either body or mind, for superintending the arrangements that were going on in it for my occupancy, and left the house whence Mr. Elder had gone to

destroy himself, and I was to live for so many years, for my own room at the inn, with very sad forebodings as to my future peace and comfort.

CHAPTER VII.

SOME six months after my settlement at Crookston, I was invited to John Ogle's marriage; and though my old flame was nearly quenched, the thought of it gave me for the time a heavy heart. When once I had thoroughly realized how hopeless my love was, I had set myself to root up all the feelings which it would have been wrong for me to cherish towards Jane Wood in her new position. So far I had succeeded pretty well; but it did give me no little pain when

John, in his usual hearty out-spoken way, came to ask me to his marriage.

"Ye maun have some hand in it. Ye maun be best man if ye canna marry us— Mr. Wood's for doing that himself— but, Mathew," John always called me Mathew when much excited and in earnest, "ye maun come; we couldna do at all without you that day, neither Jane nor me."

"It is not that I don't wish you all happiness and prosperity from the bottom of my heart, but I do wish you would not ask me; I would far rather come down quietly, and see you at Wark, as soon as you have gotten settled. Nobody will miss me. I am not a fitting person for a wedding guest, and would be only a regular kill-joy among your friends."

"Nae fear, nae fear; ye maun come. I'll take no denial; and ye ken all the folk that's

to be there very near as well as me. Now you'll be best man, will ye not? Tell me, Mathew, for I maun let the folk ken at hame."

"No, no, John; if I come, it will be as a friend only. Look at me, man!" I attempted to speak pleasantly, but fancy that I failed lamentably. "I'm not such a gainly person as to lead the bride before all your friends. Look, man, you've forgotten my lameness. Think how the bridesmaid would like me for a joe!"

"She would be very well off if she got you, indeed I think she would, Mathie. But what does it matter what she thought? Everybody else would be pleased to see you, and Jane and me in particular."

"Well, John, you must take my answer. I'll come, but I'll not act as your groom's man. I'm far too awkward for that post,

and I'll not take it. But where are ye going to be married?"

"We're gaun across the March. Mr. Wood couldna marry us in England, and Jane doesna like Church marriages any more than me, and so we'll gang down to Jedburgh, or over to Yetholm. We havena decided yet, and we'll gang straight from the inn to Wark, to our ain house. I'm to get the lines on Monday, and we'll be off early on Tuesday morning. I think it's likely to be at the "King's Arms" at Yetholm myself, for it's about half-way; but I'll send up a man on Saturday to tell you all about it. Ye could ride over on your pony if it's there brawly, or else come down, and one of the hinds will drive ye up in the gig on Monday afternoon. Mind we a' expect ye, and will be muckle disappointed if ye're no there."

So I engaged to go, and John left me in high spirits, his handsome face shining full of buoyant hope; and I was left to feel the smart of my old wound, and to subdue the feelings which his conversation had awakened.

I passed these intervening days, I mind, in a half-excited, dreamy state; and though I managed, on the whole, to preserve an outward calm, the fire was still smouldering within. I, however, each day succeeded better in acquiring composure of mind; and I strove, by looking at the subject from all points, to prepare myself for the arrival of the day. I mind well that the contest was so great, that I could not prepare my sermons for the Sabbath-day so well as ordinary, and so I had to read part of one of them in the pulpit. I tried very hard, it is true, to prevent the people from seeing it,

which was not right, as it gave a guilty look to the transaction, as I soon found out, for on that very Sabbath afternoon, I was told about it by a young man, who was a great friend of mine. The people grumbled, he said, at it; and he hoped, for my sake, that I would not do it again, for they would stand anything rather than a read sermon. It was the first appearance towards myself of their quarrelsome spirit, and it nettled me not a little, as I told him roundly. It was very annoying at a time when I needed all my presence of mind, to be irritated by such a thing as this, especially as I had never done so before, and never would again. On the Monday, however, I am not sure but what he had said, told with a good effect upon me, for I felt much more composed and calm; and I looked forward to my ride to Yetholm with a lighter heart than I had

done at any previous time since I had heard of the marriage.

Marriages among the border population of England, who are almost all of them Presbyterians, were, before the passing of the Dissenters' Marriage Act, most generally celebrated in Scotland—I speak, of course, of regular marriages, where every solemnity and form was observed. There were others, the majority, I am forced to confess, which were celebrated there, too, without any solemnity or form at all — the irregular marriages to wit, which are still, and have been all my time, the chiefest blemishes of the Presbyterians of the North. I have often thought that these at first originated in, the dislike to marriages in the Church, which were so public, and required such a long, open, public proclamation of the banns, and joined to that, the facility with which

the whole could be done on the other side of the March. All the efforts of our Church Courts, and Church censures, have been unable to put these down, so that irregular weddings are the rule—though they cover, with a thin cloak, much hidden iniquity—and the regular ones the exception. It is a very common thing indeed, after a hiring fair, to hear of half-a-dozen or a dozen such weddings, of which there was no word the day before. The Ettrick Shepherd once said, when he spoke in scorn of the doctrines of Gall, and Spurzheim, that "there were mony bumps after Selkirk fair," and so I say, that there are still many of these impromptu unions after all the fairs on the Border. A lad falls in with a lass at Berwick or Kelso suppose, that he has seen before, but has no particular acquaintance with. They go about all day together, and when

night comes on, and they are on their way home, they become confidential; and it is quite as likely as not, that they turn back or cross the March at some place on their way, and before almost they know what they are doing, they are man and wife, indissolubly bound for life, and exposed, for months to come, to all manner of surmises and harassing suspicions, from their friends and neighbours, till they can find the fitting opportunity to make it known. Such cases I have known, in scores; as well as where it was regularly preconcerted beforehand, and both met at the fair for the express purpose, in hundreds. I mind looking at the paper the Saturday after a Berwick fair-day, and counting no less than twenty couples of farm-servants, who had been married that day at Lamberton Toll, and that by no means represented the whole, for many of

them shrank from the publicity which the others courted.

Regular marriages, however, at that time among our people of the best class and character, were generally celebrated in Scotland too. The banns were regularly proclaimed it is true, in the parish churches where the parties lived, and then the bride and bridegroom and their friends went across the Border to the first public-house, or to the house of some friends, and then were married by their own, or some neighbouring minister. It may be supposed that this was most likely to give occasion to considerable riot and debauchery, and such was most frequently the case, though I am glad to say not in this instance; for besides the presence of Mr. Wood and myself, the whole party set off to the bridegroom's house, as soon as the ceremony was over.

On the Tuesday, I started early for Yetholm. It is true that there is no canonical hours in Scotland, and I did not need to hurry, but I did so nevertheless. A feeling of dull curiosity had succeeded to the more painful agitations, and emotions, which before had troubled me; and as I had never been at a wedding, and might be called on myself to perform the ceremony at any time, I thought it was quite legitimate in me to be curious. I have often wondered since then, what Jane Wood could mean by being so urgent for my presence at her marriage; and only in one of two ways could I ever find a solution. Either she was altogether callous and indifferent to my feelings—for she knew well how keenly I had felt—or she thought that the company, and the novelty would help to strengthen my resistance to emotions, which she knew still had

power over me, and that I would be sooner familiarized, with her as John's wife in this way. Any way I saw myself, that it would be less painful to salute her as Mrs. Ogle, before an assembled company of friends, than if my first sight of her were in her own house and alone.

I got to Yetholm long before the bridal party made their appearance; and as I was anxious to put away all the painful thoughts, that would have taken possession of me had I waited alone at the inn, and as I ever had a great curiosity to see as much as possible of that strange people the gipsies, now that I was in their head-quarters, I went away through that part of the town which they inhabit—for after the manner of Orientals they dwell in a district apart and separate from the people of Kirk Yetholm. I had a long conversation with their king for the

time being, Peter Young, an old patriarchal rascal, a great lover of whisky, and a most importunate beggar. Yetholm is the metropolitan city of that strange race, who frequent the border counties of England and Scotland, and are all subjects of their king, who is a thorough despot. Almost all the muggers of Northumberland, profess to belong to this horde, which has dwelt here so long, though they have also a place near Morpeth, where they have settled down a little. Any one who is at all familiar with the eastern border, must often have seen these muggers encamped on the moors, and in the sheltered lanes. Living partly by their traffic in coarse earthenware, partly by their plunder, swelling the ranks of smugglers and poachers, almost monopolizing these latter departments of evil-doing: indeed they have become sadly corrupted, and cannot now boast the

pure blood of their race: numbers of Saxon interlopers and imitators, have mingled with them, who, while they have assimilated a little to the swarthy Gitano in habits and manners, have at the same time imparted to the latter somewhat of more modern tastes, and professions, than the old gipsy race before possessed. When first they settled at Yètholm under the noted John Faa, the King of Little Egypt, as he was called, so far as could be discovered, they had no formal religion, but now the Yetholm clans are professedly Presbyterians, and bring their children to the parish church to be baptized just like their Scottish neighbours. Their conversion may, however, well be doubted, I fancy, for I never could find anything all my life, and I have often come into contact with them, that would lead me to believe that they knew anything whatever

about the Gospel, but only the Saviour's name.

I found the whole marriage party arriving, when I went back to the inn, and as soon as they had all gathered, and quieted a little, the ceremony went on, John Ogle's sister acting as best maid, and Mr. Jervis as best man. I had steeled my heart to endurance, though I must say it cost me a great effort to seem calm and collected while the ceremony was going on. It is never in any case a long ceremony with us. A short prayer, a few questions to bride and bridegroom, joining of their hands, a short exhortation, and another short prayer and benediction, and the two were made one flesh. Mr. Wood, poor man, felt very much, I saw, for his voice shook and trembled a great deal, in the last prayer and blessing; and little did I wonder at

it, for his companion and friend for so many years was then separated from him, and a void made in the Manse at the Craig, which could not be filled up again, and very likely he foresaw that the time would soon come, when even Anne would go the same road, and he would be left alone altogether, little wonder, then, that he was sorrowful.

After the ceremony, we had some refreshments, while the horses rested and fed. We were a large and jovial company, and I mind I was shocked, and hurt at the conversation, which was ruder and more indelicate than I had supposed possible; but people of good station even, thought they had a right to say things at weddings in that country then, which if spoken in ordinary society, would now cause them to be sent to Coventry. I fancy folk do get used to such things; but I

mind I wondered that Mr. Wood, so lately sorrowful, did not restrain the company, for sometimes I did not dare to look any of the younger lassies in the face, or the lads either for that matter, the jokes were so coarse.

But we soon were all astir again, on horses and in gigs; we all set off across the border, to convoy the new-married people home; and such a procession as we formed was not often seen in Yetholm. The whole town, gipsies and all, turned out to see us start, and the mischievous boys and young men continued firing pistols and guns, and at last, at the end of the town, blocked up the road, and would not let us pass, till the bridegroom had given them money for a football, the universal tax on the borders, that all new-wed persons have to pay. The same happened at all the villages we passed on our way to Wark, and when we got near

the house, the young men set off racing their horses along the heath, preparatory to trying, which should first reach the house, and win the brooses. My pony was like to grow demented by the firing, and the shouting, and the galloping of the horses, and it was as much as I could do to keep my seat on his back; but when we reached within a mile of Wark, all the hinds of John's farm and the feuers of the village were out to meet us, and they gave us such salute as I never heard before: every sort of gun and pistol was in requisition, and there was firing here and firing there, and horses prancing, the men cheering, and the women screaming, and to crown it all, my horse took it into his head to join the racers who now started in right earnest, and away I flew, out of the crowd that accompanied the gigs of the cavalcade, doing all I could

to pull Donald up; but all would not do, he wanted his share of the fun and honour, and he got it, for we shot past all the others like an arrow, and me and Mr. Jervis got first to the house in a dead heat, and so won the broose much against my will.

I did not stay long at the house, for after dinner the company grew far too noisy for me, and so, after Donald had recovered a little from his exertions, I set out in the calm twilight to return home, which I reached all safe, though very tired, but not near so much depressed in spirits as I had fancied I should be. Indeed, now that Jane was Mrs. Ogle, I felt more composed and better settled than before, and never afterwards felt the same pain when I saw or thought of her, as I had formerly done.

CHAPTER VIII.

BEFORE long, I found that there was a great deal of truth in what Mr. Ayton had said, about the strife and bickerings of my people at Crookston. I mind very well how my eyes were gradually opened to this, by their continued squabblings, and attempts to get me involved in their personal quarrels, which, indeed, I could not in every case avoid doing, for my own personal interests were so very often mingled with the things they quarrelled about, that

in self-defence I had sometimes to take a part. On the whole, however, I got on very well for some years; all the parties into which the congregation was split liked me very well as a minister, and as I continued to preach them good sermons, and never read them, and especially paid great attention to visiting them all, spending two or three days a week in this pastoral work, I had perhaps, properly speaking, less to complain of than might have been expected. It was galling, to be sure, I mind that well, to hold meetings of my office-bearers, because they always quarrelled, and I did not like the loose morality which they indulged in at all. Our Kirk Session particularly, which had the government of the congregation, in spiritual matters, entirely in its power, was far too lax for my notions; and do as I liked, I could not get

the standard of knowledge, and of moral character raised, for those seeking to be admitted as members. The morality of the borders is very loose indeed still, and it was much laxer then, than it is now. I do not mean to say that it is worse than that of other rural districts of the kingdom, for I believe it is far lower in these districts, than people of education and station generally think; certainly, I found it bad enough when I first came to take charge of a congregation, and Hoprig was in this respect a paradise when compared with Crookston.

The Presbyterian Church is the Church of the people, in the north of England, quite as much as it is in Scotland. In this parish, in which I lived so long as minister, for example, we numbered more than ten Presbyterians for one belonging to the Establish-

ment, and all the schools were under our charge just as the parish schools in Scotland were. Consequently, discipline devolved almost wholly upon its rulers, I might say, altogether, for I mind not of hearing of any instance of discipline exercised by the Church of England all the forty years I was a minister there. It was the sink into which all the dregs of our Meetings flowed during all my active life, and if lately since my retirement, there has been action a little more vigorous, the result of the Puseyite tendencies of the rector, it has been directed more to hurt and annoy Presbyterianism, than to check the openly profane and profligate, and in some instances that could be easily quoted, has assumed the shape of direct persecution of the pure rather than chastisement of the impure. But I wander from my subject, I, with my Kirk Session, had spiritual jurisdiction over

perhaps fifteen hundred people of full age, besides children growing up, as many as twelve hundred of these men and women, being members during most of my ministry, and as each Northumbrian, of the lowest class especially, is constrained by the force of public opinion to become a member of the Church, it was no little trial to me to examine, and approve of the numbers, that came forward at each communion season. It was at the first of these occasions that I began to perceive the laxity of my companions, and coadjutors the elders. I mind still how much I was distressed, when at a special meeting, I read over to them the names of those I thought fitted for that privilege, and also of those who had applied, but whom I did not deem properly qualified, and I found my exceptions received with murmurs and complaints, and fears that this one would

leave the meeting, and that such a family would be offended, if such another were not admitted, and then some of them cast up to me, the way in which the old ministers had done, and that, if I was to be so particular, many folk would leave besides the rejected young people; and so, much against my will, I gave in to them for that time, but little was the advantage, for every one of those I had expressed doubts about, knew before the week was over, that I had wished to keep them back for a time, for it turned out that my elders, men ordained to rule over the Church, were so thoroughly infected with the gossiping spirit of the district, that our most particular secrets were made common to all the country-side as soon as possible after our meetings.

And in the matter of baptisms, it was just

as bad. I have said that morality was at a very low ebb amongst us, so low, indeed, that it was hardly considered anything wrong for a woman to have a child before marriage; and irregular marriages, to prevent such a mishap, as exposure before even our lax tribunal, were regarded as only worthy of a few half-jocular observations by way of reproof. As this was the great sin of the district, and moreover one very perilous, I set my face against it from the first, and strove by every means to put it down; but all my efforts were like to be counteracted by my session, who, instead of upholding and aiding me in my desire after purity, opposed me openly and reviled me in secret, for my stiffness and obstinacy. In regard of unmarried women having children, they were willing to concur in the exercise of a little more severity, but irregular marriages were

so ordinary, that they would not sanction any prolonged deprivation of privileges for them; but I would not give way, and only after a good long probation, did I permit such as lapsed, to enter the communion of the church again. The only point on which I yielded, and I did so by the advice of ministers older than myself, was that I baptized illegitimate and quasi-legitimate children, after rebuking as severely as I could both of the parents, when that was possible. I did not myself consider irregular marriages so bad as the other cases, I mind. I fancy, it was because I was a border bred man myself, and had been accustomed to hear of them all my life, and knew many decent people, who had been married in that way. I mind well how it gradually dawned upon me, that there was scarcely any difference between the two sins, or rather the

one sin in its two aspects, and then how horrified I felt at my former procedure, and now, when I am an old man, and never preach except for a recreation, I fancy that the morality of the district would be much better, and the young men and women much purer than they are yet, if that kind of marriage was altogether abolished, for the knowledge of such a facility, by which shame can be in a manner covered, is, I am sure, a prolific source of much hidden wickedness among those people.

I used always to rebuke these culprits, but as I never was a good hand at these things, my rebukes were easily taken, and did not put that stop to the evil that I expected, for all the time I was at Crookston irregular marriages were the order of the day, and every year numbers of illegitimate children were brought to me to be baptized.

I mind well the first baptism of that kind that I ever had was one of Mr. Ayton's people. I was preaching for him as he was very unwell, and could not leave the house, and so he asked me to go after the service to a place very near at hand, to baptize a child. I consented, as was to be expected, for I ever desired to be neighbourly. But how was I astonished, when just as I had got my bands on, and was looking out the Psalms in the psalm book, before going to the pulpit, a young woman was shown into the parlour, in which we were, and two or three of his elders followed. It was the mother of the child I was to baptize, and she had come to be rebuked for her sin. I was very much annoyed at the dilemma in which this placed me, and still more as I heard the words of reproof from Mr. Ayton's lips, and saw the indifference with which they were listened to,

by the young woman, indeed; the only persons who seemed to feel at all were the two old elders who took part in, while they were ashamed of their minister's laxity. I remonstrated with Mr. Ayton, but he only put it off, that was the way he always did in such cases, and that he found it to answer better, than either a severer probation or reproofs public or private did, and that his church for many years had been freer of such misfortunates than any around, and he did not see any necessity when the sin was not clamant among the people, to be very hard on young women.

After the worship and the dinner was over, I went away with one of the elders to do this distasteful duty, distasteful only because of the circumstances in which it was performed—determined to be as severe as I could in my exhortation against such sins,

but when I saw the distress of the old mother and the confusion and shame of the brother and sister, I could not speak at all as I intended, and so with a heavy heart I returned home, trying to strike out some clear, consistent course, in pursuing which I might lift up my voice emphatically against this great vice.

CHAPTER IX.

A VERY short time after my settlement at Crookston I was up seeing my mother, and helping Mr. Wood at his Sacrament. I had told my own people that there would be no preaching that day, or given them the play, as they called it, as if they had been boys at school, and which they enjoyed as much, for it gave them an opportunity of going to other meetings, or to see their friends, and to go to a place of worship with them; not that I made a custom of

doing that, or ever approved of it much, but sometimes it could not be helped, and then it was very customary in the country, so much so, indeed, that I have known ministers away as often as a dozen times in a single year; and their pulpits empty for maybe two Sabbaths running, which I ever thought very bad. However, I was at the Craig on the Sabbath, and on the Monday after the preaching, and the ordinary dinner with the elders, I went down to Jedburgh to see an old friend, no other than John Walkinshaw, who was now an advocate, and had come out on some business to that old town. He was to have been at the Craig the day before, but had not been able to come so far on the Saturday, and he was far too strict a man to travel between Jedburgh and it on a Sabbath day. However, it was his purpose, in fulfilment of an old promise, to

go back with me to Crookston, and stay there for a week. We met with great joy, as was natural. The last time we had seen each other we were both of us just finishing our college curriculum, and on the eve of entering upon our professions, and we had much to tell each other of our success. Now he was a rising advocate, and an elder in the Church, though so young a man; it was customary then for all the advocates to be made elders, if they by any means could accomplish it, because of the law business of the Church, in which no one could take part but elders; and very often with this mere money end in view, men most unfit were put into that sacred and responsible office. But John Walkinshaw was not of that kind, he was fit for, and worthy of, this high office, and I have no doubt was a good ruler. I was a rising man

too, successful as a preacher, and with the largest and best filled church on the English side of the Border, and having the best stipend withal, and so we had a great deal to say to each other.

We were to stop in Jedburgh all that night, and John being intimate with some of the chief people in the place, we were invited to the house of one of them to supper. It was a fine evening, I mind, and we walked all about the little town, which I knew well, having been so often in it with my mother in my early days, so I was able to show my friend the old abbey, and the other ferlies of the ancient borough. Just about the gloaming we went to the house of John's acquaintance, who was a writer, one of the chief men of the place, and provost that year. We had sat down to supper, and were enjoying ourselves very

much, in a quiet sober fashion, as became a company of ministers and elders, for the parish minister was there as well as me, when all at once the bell of the kirk—it was part of the old abbey—began to ring hurriedly, and a messenger, with a blanched and terrified face, came running, with news for the provost, that the French were coming, that they had landed some way about the mouth of the Coquet, and that all the beacons were blazing in Northumberland, and the Merse. This terrible news set us all to our feet, and we went out to the street, and there, sure enough, was Cheviot flaming forth the tidings all over the Border countries, and when we got to the church-tower, we saw from hill-top and ruined castle, towards the south and east the same baleful summons repeated. The provost after a careful survey of the whole horizon

during which, we could see fires lighting west and northwards, one after another on the signal posts in Liddesdale, and Ettrick Forest; and on the Eildon Hills, and the heights far off to the eastward, there speedily flamed forth into the quiet night; the fierce fire warning all to prepare for approaching strife. During the few minutes we stood there, so many fresh bale-fires had been lighted, that the whole horizon round and round us was marked by a ring of fire, and the whole country almost instantaneously alarmed. We went with our host towards the Town-house, to which now there was flocking the principal people of the town and neighbourhood, for Jedburgh was one of the alarm-posts for the districts round it, and there we heard and saw what would have done good to our rulers and cheered our good old king; men of peace,

who knew nothing of war, coolly preparing for the coming emergency, and making provision, as well as they could, for the arrival of the volunteers, and fencible men of the district, who were already, everybody well knew, fast gathering to their several rendezvous. I mind well I felt my heart rise within me as we passed through the streets, and saw the men of the town coming out of their houses, in their uniforms, and with their weapons; and I thought it was clear the old martial spirit, which used to say so proudly:

"Fye, Tynedale rogues, Jeddart's here,"

was still unquenched, even after so many years of peace; and they were so cool, yet so enthusiastic, that I never for an instant doubted of their ultimate triumph, though

opposed to the grim warriors of Marengo or Austerlitz—no, not for an hour.

But my friend, John Walkinshaw, was a member of the corps of gentlemen volunteers in Edinburgh, and great disgrace would he have felt had he been absent when they assembled, and so he only stopped long enough to be sure that it was no false alarm that was arousing Teviotdale, before he got a postchaise-and-four, and set off to Edinburgh amid the cheers of the people, who filled the market-place, who had some way got to know his errand, as fast as four horses could carry him; and well did he urge them on, for he told me afterwards that he was at the alarm-post at Dalkeith, thoroughly armed, and answered to his name at daylight in the morning.

It was useless proposing to sleep that night: the town was far too much excited to think

of such a thing; and so I, when I was tired of walking about the streets, went to my own room at the inn, and sat at the window, watching the blazing beacons that were to be seen from it, and the arrival of the different bodies of volunteers. It was a very striking sight to see troop after troop, company after company, of horse and foot, wheeling out of the different streets into the market-place. The latter forms the centre of the town, and the four principal streets all lead into it; my inn was just opposite the Town-house, and I could see all that was done fine. It was as light as day almost, for all the windows were lighted up with candles, and numbers of men with blazing torches stood all round the square, and the flash of the light on the brazen ornaments and buckles of the accoutrements, and on the clear glancing barrels of the guns had a very

striking effect, I mind. I had not forgotten the grand military display I had seen in London, nor the fine Highland and Lowland regiments fresh from the wars, who took part in it, but there was no part of it equal to this, except the landing of the 'Victory's' men at Greenwich Hospital.

As the day was breaking, the men from Liddesdale and the far-off places began to arrive. Afraid of the French! No, truly, we have no need to fear them, for all our Border men are soldiers by nature, if not by art, and all that saw the regiments and squadrons that mustered that morning said the same. There was no fear on those faces, no doubt nor hesitation at all manifested; even the women were cool and collected amid their excitement, and stirred up the alacrity and courage of the men, if it needed such aids, not a little. The enthusiasm in-

creasing, as it always does in Scotland, steadily, did not reach its full height till the descendants of the most warlike of all the Border clans made their appearance in the grey dawn, whole companies of them bearing the redoubtable names of Armstrong and Elliot, from far Liddesdale, while just before them came the Scots and Kerrs from the Forest and Teviotdale. These men of the west, from the banks of the Esk and the Liddel, from Canobie, Eskdale Muir, and Ruberslaw, came to this their alarm-post as fresh as if they had just assembled, and as full of martial fire and daring courage as ever their ancestors displayed in making a foray into, or resisting one from England. Well did the gathered bands and towns-people know who were coming, as through the heavy morning air the faint notes of martial music were heard, gradually swelling

louder and louder, and emphatic were the cheers, and universal were the feelings of admiration as the full, bold, heart-stirring strains of the old Border gathering was clearly heard. To the music their ancestors had ever rallied at—to the gathering that for centuries had been known as their own, they now advanced, and many of the volunteers, and others below me, I heard begin to hum the air and to repeat the ower-word, as the full tone of the tune began to fill the square:

"Oh, wha daur meddle wi' me,
And it's wha daur meddle wi' me,
My name it is little Jock Elliot,
And it's wha daur meddle wi' me."

The men themselves speedily put this excitement to silence, as they marched up

one of the streets from the west, a firm compact body of brave men, with resolution in their faces, and courage in their hearts. I mind well, I was struck with the sight of some of them carrying extra muskets and accoutrements; and when I asked the reason, I found that the same spirit which had prompted John Walkinshaw to hasten, as fast as four horses could carry him, into Edinburgh, had induced the women folk of two or three of these Liddesdale volunteers, to send the trappings of their friends, who were absent on business, with the regiment, for they knew well that, as soon as those absentees saw the signals blazing, they would, wherever they were, make for Jedburgh; and, indeed, I saw myself more than one hurry up to the ranks and take his weapons, as they came into the market-place. One in particular, I mind came as

fast as a horse could carry him into the town, that he might be in time to join his comrades; for in the wilds of Selkirkshire he had seen the beacons, and he had seized the first horse he came upon, and had ridden for life or death to join his friends; and when that horse had become faint, he had turned it loose and seized another; and he arrived just in time to hear the shouts with which his fellows were received, and to be greeted himself as cordially by his kindred and friends as he sprang off his horse to join their ranks.

It was exceedingly gratifying to see the alacrity, with which all had turned out to meet the apprehended danger. So far as the men from Ettrick and Liddesdale knew, an attack might be expected every hour, and the first intimation of the enemy they might receive, be an actual assault; but still un-

daunted, as if accustomed to war all their lives, they marched forward, "*pro aris et focis*" (for their hearths and altars), the good land in which they gained their daily bread, and where they had enjoyed the blessings inestimable of a pure Gospel, and a freedom such as no nation in the world but themselves then enjoyed. Those brave men appreciated their privileges, and were prepared to fight in their defence; and with a cause so good as theirs, who with any chance of success could have stood before them?

It has been the fashion, as I have often seen during my long experience of the world, to depreciate such volunteer forces as these, and throw ridicule on those great statesmen who have put a high value on them. Well, such men may not be able to compete with men more regularly trained; but had any-

body seen them as I saw them mustered on that grey dawn, so fresh and vigorous, in such splendid order, moving so wholly as one man, and so thoroughly prepared for, and enthusiastic about, the campaign they anticipated, they would have speedily changed their opinion, and have come to the same conclusion which a peaceable man like me arrived at—that, to wit such an army, a host so composed, of men so strongly attached to their country, so enthusiastic and yet so cool and grave, and—laugh, military man, if you will — so well trained, must be a very dangerous antagonist even to the most thoroughly disciplined forces, and a strength and safeguard to a country in danger from an enemy. Now-a-days, when our rulers are very properly arming and disciplining the militia, such an auxiliary force, which could be maintained at so little expense, ought not

to be despised. It is true, there is something ludicrous in the idea of a fat, unwieldy shopkeeper, or his slim, simpering shopman, being of great use as volunteers; but there is nothing of the kind in the notion when a Northumberland or a Roxburgh peasant or a farmer, or a stalwart engineer or artizan in the large towns, is concerned, for these if drilled and armed, would be valuable helpers in the land's defence. Thousands and tens of thousands would do now as they did then, in my young days, rise early and work hard to be able to enjoy their hours of training, and there is little doubt would be as prompt and fearless as those men from the Teviot, the Jed, and the Liddel, that assembled in my presence for the country's defence forty years ago, and little doubt but the Elliots and Armstrongs of this day, would as readily march to

"Wha daur meddle wi' me," as any that ever bore the name.

But all this alarm, preparation, gathering, and display of patriotic zeal, courage, and good order was so far needless, not useless, if it were only for the lesson it gives to the men of these later times, but needless, for there was no invasion—it was only a false alarm. Shortly after the last contingent had arrived, as I have mentioned, and while the cheers and the bold music were still ringing in our ears, an express from Berwick and Kelso came in, "bloody with spurring, fiery red with haste," to say that so far as was known to the eastward and northward, there were no enemies landed; and soon after, young Peter Jervis, from Alnwick, specially detached from his troop of cavalry, which had assembled there, with like tidings. The alarm had taken its rise on the Kyloe Hills,

and had spread north and south with terrible rapidity; but it was altogether groundless. No French ships had been seen on the coast; and it turned out, that the watcher on Kyloe had, just as the gloaming fell, been deceived by some signal, made from Bamborough, either to a passing vessel, or the Holy Island, which he had understood as meaning the landing of an enemy, and so the whole display was needless, but not useless, for it testified to the spirit and preparation of the country, and gladdened the hearts of all patriotic men, in high places and in low, at home and abroad, and struck a chill into the hearts of the French prisoner officers, in those far inland towns, when they saw the promptitude with which the country rose to meet it.

The occasion of the gathering was however improved, and the chief military officer who had the command of that alarm-post,

determined to pass the men in review before him; and struck as he had been by their promptitude and speed in the morning, I heard him say that he could not have believed it possible, that an irregular corps could have taken the field so well prepared in every way. In fact, they were ready for any duty, and as they stood, could have marched at once into battle. And when the review was over, the whole of the old borough, in itself so full of warlike traditions, resounded with hospitality, everybody, however poor, entertaining some of the warlike guests; and the day which a few hours ago was looked for anxiously and not without a fear, became a holiday such as was seldom seen on the borders in our peaceful times. But first of all, I mind it as clear as I do what happened yesterday, the men were all gathered on the banks of the Jed, a little out of the town,

and all the ministers of the place, and many from the parishes round about—for they had come in with the men of their villages, mostly at their head—and me with them, in the centre, and we returned thanks to the Almighty for the courage he had given us, and also for warding off from us the danger we feared. I mind, I being the greatest stranger among the ministers present gave out the psalm, which Luther, they say, loved so well, and which Luther's enemy, the great Emperor, heard in almost the last hour of his life, the 46th:

"God is our refuge and our strength,
In straits a present aid,
Therefore although the earth remove,
We will not be afraid.
Though hills amidst the seas be cast,
Though waters roaring make,
And troubled be; yea, though the hills
By swelling seas do shake."

And then, when we had sung it with all our hearts, I prayed. I mind how deeply I felt at that time—how solemnly impressed with our entire dependence on Jehovah of Hosts, and how my heart glowed with thankfulness and gratitude, so that I spoke as one inspired. Then a chapter was read, and then another psalm and prayer from the secession minister. It had a good effect, this short time spent in solemn worship, on the volunteers and yeomen; all of them were Presbyterians, and they went away to their duties, and to enjoy the hospitalities of the townsfolk with their courage not at all lessened, but with their minds better prepared to enjoy the blessings of peace.

People will perhaps say, that I take altogether a priestly view of this matter, and that such exercises were calculated rather to decrease their courage and boldness. So

be it; it is a view taken by a priest, but why should not a priest be as good a judge of these things as another man? It may be a sufficient answer to point to the most really invincible army I ever heard of, Cromwell's: what sort of men composed it, and how did *they* go into battle? and let such questioners mind that they fought against the most daring men in the world. It was with psalms and prayers, was it not? and they never were defeated. The religious element was quite sufficient to make them superior to the boldest cavaliers, and so will it ever be. Men that appreciate the Gospel truly—though it is the great peace-maker—will be the best men to fight in a righteous cause; and the defence of the hearths of a Christian nation — let alone its altars — is surely a righteous cause.

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MATHEW PAXTON.

men and women in their love affairs the turning-point and centre of all interest; but I have no farther tale of that kind to tell. I was once in love, as I have already said, and three or four times afterwards, have met with young women that I liked very much, but as I had given up all thoughts of marrying after Jane was wedded, I need not set these down here.

It was a very sober life, mine, after all, offering very little attraction to anybody but one who was really desirous of the glory of his Maker, and the good of his fellows. Not that everything was quiet—far from that: our world, our ocean, was so small, that the storms that passed over it raised only mimic waves, and such as the more energetic men of the greater world would laugh at. But it was nevertheless true that the swell was as great, and the danger

as imminent proportionably, for the barks were weaker and the seamen less skilful. The pain and suffering consequent upon those difficulties which such secluded men as me experienced, may be as great as that of a great public man, when he finds his progress stopped, and his plans thwarted—the loss of an effort as distressing to the like of us as that which a great general feels at the loss of a battle, and the anguish flowing from my failures as great as if these failures were known to the whole world, instead of to a country-side. I often met with strange things and strange people; indeed, I believe that in a lone country place you have a better opportunity of coming in contact with such than elsewhere; for there, whenever a character is marked, it is so decidedly so, that it forces its peculiarities on one's attention, and it was with

great interest, I mind, and often with no little pain, that I used to trace the vagaries of thought and expression; that I found interest in observing the peculiar diversities into which they ran, and pain when I found them utterly impervious to warning and reproof, when I tried to show them the consequences and tendencies of their thoughts.

But I must hasten on. My clerk, Willie Sibbet, was one of these peculiar characters so often found, hanging on to ministers of dissenting meetings. Willie was a tailor, with a hooked nose, and a peculiar pawky expression about his face. Willie liked snuff well, and whisky better, and sometimes committed strange vagaries; he was, however, a married man, and his wife kept him in order, as long as she lived. He was a regular borderer, and had the richest burr I ever heard. But Willie was a bit of a philosopher

withal, had gathered a few philosophical books, and some old magazines, in which science was treated in an amateur way, and in some particulars had made really very respectable progress. He puzzled me once, with one of his questions, it was something in natural philosophy, I think, and great was his delight from that time forward. "I hae fickled the priest, and I can refford to blaw a little noo," said Willie to one of his neighbours, and blaw Willie did at no small rate on his small horn after that. Willie aspired, moreover, to literary honours, and was the correspondent of one or two of the country newspapers, sending in to them all the wonderful records of gigantic cabbages, wonderful turnips, and other wonders and events of the neighbourhood, and to a little magazine of the old school, published in Berwick, many puzzles in mathematics and algebra, which

afforded, or, as he said, refforded amusement and occupation to the schoolmasters, and farthest advanced boys during the long winter nights. Really, Willie was a wonderful man.

He was the clerk or precentor of the meeting, and also had charge of letting the seats, and receiving the rents, which he handed over directly to me, so that he was in reality my factotum, and had a regular salary of five pounds a year for the performance of these duties. When I first came, I set about to visit all the people in their own houses; and as the elders were all labouring men, and had no time to spare for this part of their duties as elders in the church, Willie was employed to accompany me throughout the district where my people lived, that I might the sooner become acquainted with them all, and be able to call upon them by

myself. I believe this was the happiest time of all Willie's life, for it was a very different thing—putting aside the honour of being the priest's right hand man altogether—walking about the country in the fine summer weather, from sitting all day on the top of a table in a hind's or collier's house, sewing at the coarse clothes for a shilling a day, and so Willie made the most of it. In the farm-houses he was as well treated in the kitchen, as I was in the parlour; and as he was full of the country news and scandals, he entertained the servants, and was well entertained by them in return. It was a bright time for him, and he used afterwards to date things as having happened before or after that year "I gaed about wi' the young priest."

Willie was full of the quarrels and strivings of my people. He sided with nobody, or

everybody, as the case might be, for he said he was the priest's man, and bid to be impartial, and as he used to walk by the side of my pony on the lonely country roads, many a story did he tell me, and many a character would he have torn to pieces, had I given him leave. Crookston Meeting had really been a misfortunate place, in which there never had been a settled peace. Always stirring, and squabbles, and if sometimes, such as at a communion season, or for a while after the settlement of a new minister, things were quiet, it was only a hollow truce, in which the different parties, like belligerents in a greater warfare, took breath and gathered srength for the farther struggle. I found it was quite common to blame the minister, as being too slack with them, just as Mr. Ayton had done, and they usually pointed to Carton Meeting as the very model of a well-ordered

one. *I* did not think so though, as little did Willie Sibbet, who while he traced the turmoils and disquietudes of our people to a very wild source, said very sensibly, that the stir and bustle among us was far better than the dead sleep of the folk at Carton, and I thought so too. Willie would, perhaps, have preferred to be the irresponsible agent of an irresponsible despot, just as old Hogarth, Mr. Ayton's clerk was; but at Crookston that was impossible, and he had turned his thoughts the other way, and perceived that our state was out of the question a healthier one than theirs.

But I must set down Willie's legend, only it is impossible to express in letters, the inimitable burr, and tone, with which he narrated it; I have the burr myself, and have been accustomed to it all my days, but the like of Willie's for richness I never heard.

It was while we were passing over an old battle-field, where our countrymen won a great battle, and killed a Scottish king; we were going, indeed, to a place with an ominous name, savouring of the old bloody times, which the countryfolk said, indeed, it took from that great battle, and so in memory of the cries of the pursuers as they overtook the flying Scots, "Down wi' them," the peaceful farming hamlet of Downame got its name. Well, whether it was the chill feeling of horror, which such a place is apt to call up, I cannot say; but here Willie told me his legend, which tradition said was the beginning and cause of all the troubles of Crookston Meeting.

"Ye see, Mr. Paxton," he began, "Auld Mr. Elder, who built our Meeting, was priest at Carton beforehand, and had a quarrel wi' Sir John about something that he had done

on a Sabbath-day. Sir John was a kind of half-and-half meeting man, he gaed sometimes to it, sometimes to the parish church, and sometimes nae gate at a'. Ae Sabbath he fell in wi' a drover, with a lot of nowt gaun south, and they twae begun to troke and haggle about them, just as if they had been in a fair; and Sabbath though it was, Sir John bought them a'—thirty fine, black Highland kyloes, the folk that telled me said, and that was a great temptation to him, ye ken. Weel, somebody telled this to Mr. Elder, and he behooved to speak to Sir John about it; they had aye been great friends, sae he went up to the Hall on the Monday night, and quarrelled with him about it. It was never kenned, although the folk were a' very curious about it, how they got on; ony way, there was a regular disturbance, and Mr. Elder was putten out of the house by

Sir John's orders. The Meeting was on Sir John's grund, and there was nae lease nor nae writings of ony kind about it, and so Sir John sune put out Mr. Elder, puir man, from it, as weel as his house; but the priest was a bauld man, and sae he came up here, and began to preach every Sabbath down at the end of the hoff, by the waeter-side, as near to Carton as he could gang, without rinning the risk of a trespass on Sir John's land; and the folk liked him weel, and came across the fit brig, past the very doors of the auld Meeting, to hear him, and he sune gathered such a large congregation, that after a while they began to think of building anither Meeting-house here. They got the grund easy, for my Lord Kirton didna like Sir John at a', and sae he gied Mr. Elder as muckle land for a Meeting and Manse as he wanted—selled it to him I should

say for ever, for maist naething; and so as sune as he got the house built, Mr. Elder could snap his fingers at Sir John.

"But there was aye something wrang about all that was dune, and even when they were beginning the Meeting-house, there were ill folk—whether men or spirits naebody could tell, though everybody thocht they were spirits—at wark. Ae night, when the grund was marked out, and the men were gaun to begin to the foundations in the morning, somebody moved the marks that had been stuck in the grund, and put them in ither places, making the house very near twice as big as Mr. Elder meant it to be, and the men too, just began to dig and to build, without thinking whether they were doing right or no, and had gotten the wa's half up, before Mr. Elder came home. He had been away into Edinburgh, raising

money, for a week or twae, just then. And they found that they were building a place that would haud better than twenty hunder, instead of one to haud ten. Noo that we hae gotten a grand preacher like you, Mr. Paxton, it may be just as weel they made such a mistake, and built sae big a house, for a little place wouldna haud the folk that come to hear you. I let fifty mair seats last Sabbath."

"I'm very glad to hear that, Willie," said I; "but what about the story?" for I was getting weary of his prosing, and wanted him to get on.

"Well, Sir, I'm coming till't, but I thought you would like to hear a' the outs and ins of the business. The Meeting hadna been lang opened, indeed the congregation had hardly gotten settled down, and the first Sacrament had come on. Mr. Elder had a minister frae a place near Edin-

burgh to help him, and everything had dune weel sae far, when just after the tables had been fenced—it's a grand thing, that fencing o' the tables, Mr. Paxton, and I aye liked to hear the *I debar you.* I hope ye'll never get into the new-fangled notions of some of the ministers round about, and gie ower that: it's sae fine, and sae necessary, I judge—and Mr. Elder was coming down the pilpot stairs to serve the first table, when a shape like an auld man came slowly up the middle passage. What it was naebody could tell, but it was like an auld man well put on. Weel, it came up the passage till it was right in front of the priest, who had stopped at the foot of the pilpot stairs to see what the man could want. Ye may be sure that all the folk were looking at it, wondering what it could be, and what it could want. Weel, it stopped right in front of the priest,

and in sight of a' the people, and spoke lowly and cannily, yet the man that telled me said that the sound filled all the Meeting. It said this:

"'I'm sent to warn ye that you'll never have peace here. This place will aye be cursed with fightings and contentions, and will never know peace. I am sent to denounce this curse upon this house, and people from generation to generation, and to warn you that your family, as well as your people shall aye be in trouble, and that there shall be continually war and misfortune, and peace shall never be known either by them and theirs, or you and yours.'

"Some folk said it cursed the priest more terribly still, but that I dinna believe, it only said that he should have trouble in his family and congregation, and that there should never be peace, and then it vanished.

Mr. Elder and the other minister were men that didna believe in ghaists, and spirits appearing, and they tried with some of the elders to stop it; but it vanished out of their sight, and left the haill meeting in a terrible state of terror and awe. The man that telled me this story, was sitting close to the passage; and he said that though the sun was shining full through the south window, there was nae shadow on the floor, and so he thought it was an evil spirit. Mr. Elder was a bold, good man—he had been a great friend of Boston of Ettrick in his young days, and that's a guid character, Mr. Paxton—one of the best priests in the country-side, and so after a minute or two, he went on with the service without heeding what had been said; but from that day to this there has been nae peace in Crookston Meeting. We have aye had wars and rumours of wars, and sae I

fancy it will continue, till the end, or till that curse of dispeace is removed. Was nae it an awfu' thing, Mr. Paxton?"

"Yes, William, but was no effort made to find out who was the person that behaved so badly? Did nobody ever try to discover that? Most likely he would be sent by Sir John from Carton; I have little doubt of that myself, or maybe he was a daft person; did nobody ever find out who he was?"

"Na, na, they a' believed it to be a ghaist or a spirit, and the elders that tried to stop it, said it vanished from them when they had their hands maist on it, like smoke. I believe mysel', and sae did the man that telled me, that it was an evil spirit from the Lord. It's scriptural that, Mr. Paxton, for an evil spirit from the Lord troubled Saul, king of Israel, and the de'il himsel' got power to afflict Job, sae it's nae impossible that an evil spirit

might be sent to plague us. Then just think of the Meeting, and its priests: there was auld Mr. Elder died of a broken heart the folk said, and the young one drowned himself, and Mr. Cutter, puir man—he was ca'ed, far waur than he was—was put away, because he went ower often to Scotland. Just think of that, and then there never has been quiet or peace in the Meeting, but always trouble till you came. Maybe the curse will be now removed, and we may have a peaceable time. I'm sure there hasna been sae muckle quietness, for a' my time, as through the last six months."

"Well, Willie, I do not know what to say to your story. I do not deny that such appearances have been, but I misdoubt totally this vanishing you speak of. I think that the man must have been sent by Sir John, or that he was a crazed person, for no man

in his senses would do as he did that day. Perhaps Mr. Elder did right in not laying hold of him; but had I been in his place, I am sure I would have gripped him and found out who he was, that had made such an interruption in my church. It was no ghost nor spirit, rely upon it, and to make that an excuse for dispute and wrangling, is neither christian-like nor manly."

"May be sae, Sir, but the folk aye gie that as the reason for our disturbances, no that I ever take any pairt in the quarrels of the congregation. I'm the clerk, and I stand aye by the priest, but I canna help hearing what's gaun on among them, and a'body lays the blame of our fightings on the denunciation of that first Sacrament."

I was interested more than I wanted Willie to see in that story, and for many days and nights it "refforded" me, as Willie

would have said, subject for reflection. I do not say that I am a believer in ghosts or spirits reappearing, there are difficulties about the subject that I cannot solve, and I am sure that they did appear in Bible times. My solution of this matter was what I have stated above, but I might be wrong, and I mind I prayed that night that I might be able to remove the curse, if curse there was, from the Meeting and its ministers. At first I was bold enough in my unbelief and scorn of all supernatural agency in the matter, but a while after, and before the story had lost its first freshness in my mind, an aunt of mine far away in Liddesdale was very ill, though I knew it not, sick unto death, and my mother was away west to see her, when one night I was riding by myself alone along a very lonely road far away from any house, on my way home from a day's visiting, at

a part of that road where nobody could be hiding to fright me, I heard my name called three times: Mathew, Mathew, Mathew, in a voice I could not clearly mind, but so like my mother's or my aunt's that I thought it was one of them. I did not think much of it at the time, but a few days after, I got a letter from Liddesdale, with a black seal, and saw that my aunt had died at that very hour that I had heard the voice; so I could not help connecting these things in my own mind, and thinking it was a warning from the departing spirit to me. So I came to place more faith in the supernatural visitant of that sacramental Sabbath, and most earnestly desired that with me the curse might be removed.

CHAPTER XI.

THOUGH I say it myself, I am a very peaceable and well-disposed man, and so I should be, seeing that I am a minister. I do not deny that I have a hot temper, but that very rarely shows itself, I think; but if it often did, there need be little wonder, considering all the provocations I have had to submit to in this weary Crookston. Truly the Apostle Paul was greatly tried, and many perils had he to pass through, from all kinds of causes, and yet he gloried in his perils and

trials; though his own countrymen, and false brethren the most pitiless of all adversaries, were among his enemies. I am not a Paul in any respect, I have never been in any great peril, though I have had my losses as well as others, but as for trials I have had them in abundance. My people did not spare me, for what with their quarrels, what with their immoralities, what with the opposition I met with in my attempts at reforming them, I was often hardly enough bested, at least till I begun to get thoroughly acquainted with the peculiarities of their characters.

My people consisted of three classes: the more strictly speaking, farming population, the village tradesmen and mechanics, and the colliers; and it required me to vary my style and my address when I called on each. On the whole, the most untractable of all my people were the village coal-carters, who were

both a looser and more outrageous set than any of the others. Many a sore heart have I had with them, for they were fair enough spoken in their own houses, while fierce and furious elsewhere.

After I had fairly settled down, and had gone over the whole district, which took me a long time, I began to visit on a new plan, that is, to all indiscriminately, but far more particularly than before. I found that the best way to get a particular knowledge of my flock, and very often I met with people and circumstances that greatly interested me, though I must say I never looked much out of the way for them. This was particularly the case among the collier people, but many years passed before I could get ready and free access to the more interesting class of them. With the hinds and the farmers, on the contrary, I at once came very intimate,

and soon knew them all very well, but above all I liked visiting the shepherds' houses. I had a good many of them in my district, which extended a considerable way up the nearer glens and lower hills, and from them I ever found a heartier welcome, and they appeared to claim a greater right in me than did the others. And to me the odour of peat smoke on the evening air, and the sights and sounds of a shepherd's cottage were in a manner natural, and I loved them far more than the more refined cottages of the farming towns.

In one of my visits, some ten miles—my district stretched westward some fifteen—from home, I came upon a little hamlet, situated on the side of a beautiful dell. It was a bright summer afternoon, and the people were all busy in the fields in the low country, far beneath me, and this little cosy place, lying in

the deep shadow of the hill, which formed the other side of the little den, so lonely, and so quiet, looked a place into which evil had never entered, a little paradise in which only peace and content could dwell. It was an outlying sheep farm, at which there only dwelt two or three shepherds, for the farmer was a rich man, living far down in the low country near Bamborough, and so the old farm-house was now occupied by the shepherd steward. Two cottages more, with their respective byres constituted the whole community, but the situation, the dell, the burn, and the little clump of trees, which defended the houses towards the north, was so exceeding fine, that though I am not used much to admire the picturesque, I thought I could have sat looking at it for days. Thin blue smoke was curling upwards from the chimneys of all the houses, but save for that, there was

no appearance of life or animation about the place.

As I drew near, however, I heard the sound of the "muckle" wheel, and the murmur of voices in the larger house, which ceased as I came forward, and the door hastily opened, for horsemen rarely came to that dell, unless it was the master of the farm. I never had been there before, though all the people were members of my church, but they all knew me if I did not know them, and so there was a little hurry and bustle among the women, who should take my horse, and an unanimous shout of, "Eh, it's the priest."

The steward's wife was the first to reach me, while her daughter took the horse's head, and led it to a large stone, on which I dismounted, while the mother grasped my hand and said:

"Eh, Mr. Paxton, but I'm glad to see you. We began to think that ye had forgotten us a'thegether up here. Oh, Tam will be vexed, when he hears that ye've been here, and him no seen ye. Tam's a grand crack, and kens ye're faither well. But come in bye, ye're kindly welcome. We're a' real glad to see ye."

The good wife accompanied this little speech with sundry curtseys and becks, and led me into what had been the kitchen of the farm-house, but was now kitchen, and parlour, and hall—for the rest of the rooms were used as storehouses for the wool, all except one, which was kept as a bedchamber for the "maister," when he came up that length, which he sometimes did. In the middle of the floor were two "muckle" wheels, one of which was in full operation, under the management of a second daughter

of the house. I had often seen my mother spinning wool in this way—for all the clothing of the shepherds is spun in their own houses—but I may as well tell here what it is like. The wheel itself is very large, and the spinner having set it a going, with a touch of her hand, retires gradually back, so long as it continues revolving, drawing with her a thread of wool—she has a quantity of carded wool in her lap, which she draws into a continuous thread during her progress, and then when she reaches the wall, she again advances, and the thread she has spun, is coiled up rapidly on the spindle. Very cheerful is the hum, when this process is going on, which fills the house, not loud enough to interrupt the cheery conversation of the family, but sufficiently so to form a mellow accompaniment to what is going on; I always liked it much, and thought it

presented a picture of home industry, very pleasing to see. It is a great want to me now, when I go to any of the cot-houses near where I dwell, to see such tokens of domestic industry altogether wanting. Here, however, they were in full operation, and I felt myself drawn to the inmates all the more from what I saw.

"Come in, Sir, and take a seat," said the old homely matron again, "ye'll be tired with your ride, nae doubt, and hungry tae. Sit down, Sir; Jenny, put away the wheel—it's no every day the priest comes this length, sae pit it away at once, hinny, and bring the bread and cheese. Maybe ye wad take a slice of mutton ham—get down the ham, Jenny, and pit on the pan. Od, ye'll need something after such a ride."

And so the good wife bustled away to a cupboard in a corner, knocking over Jenny's

wheel in her progress, from which she brought a bottle and glass, while Jenny, never I believe, having seen a priest in the house before, hastened to get down the ham, which was hanging from the rafters overhead, and even before her mother was done with her preliminaries, for such I well knew them to be, was busy cutting slices from that savoury comestible for my refreshment. I could not stop them if I tried, I well knew, and it would have given very great offence, even if I had done so, so I let things follow their natural course. I minded well how my mother did in like cases, so I did not decline a glass out of the black bottle, which proved to be what I did not expect, very fine port wine,* which, I must say, refreshed me not a little.

* It may seem apocryphal to some to meet with wine in such a lonely spot, but the author begs to

"I am very sorry Tam's no at hame," said the goodwife, as soon as she had seen me drink a glass of wine. "Eh! he'll be sae vexed, he wad hae been sae proud to see you. We were nae angry at ye, Sir, for no coming before; it's weel kent ye cannot refford (afford) to come sae far for sae few o' us, but we've been lang longing for ye to come, and I canna tell how proud I'm mysel, to see ye sitting there."

"Well, I'm very glad to have got this length myself, Margaret," said I; "I've been reproaching myself for months past with not coming before now; but you see I must try to do as big a day's work in visiting, every day I go out as I can, and

assure his readers, that in more than one humble shepherd's and country tradesmen's house near the Cheviots, much later than forty years ago, he has had it brought to him in his pastoral visitations.

there's hardly any person on the road this way, after Milburn, so I've put off and off too long; but I'm going to stay till the evening, when perhaps the men will be home. Where is the guidman—on the hill?"

"I'm glad of that—I'm glad of that," she answered. "Haste ye, Jenny, hinny, and get out the table; the priest maun be hungry. Ye were asking where's the guidman. Aweel, I dinna ken whan he'll be hame. I've been expecting him a' day, and I dinna think he can be lang noo."

"Is he no on the hill?" repeated I.

"Na, Sir, he's been away at Morpeth fair thae twa days, but he's to be hame the night at the farthest. He should hae been before noo, but he'll no have selt the sheep sune, and so be late."

"Well, I do hope to see him before I

go," said I. "I would like to have a little meeting, with all the folk, before I leave to-night. I'll stop as long as I can, but I wish you to send somebody to the hill, to tell the other men, for I desire greatly to see them all in their own houses."

"That will I," she said with alacrity. "Maggy'll rin up to them, and she can gang ower to the mill, too. The folk there gang to your ain auld Meeting at the Craig, and they'll be glad to see you, nae doubt. Od! there hasna been a minister here since Maggy was chirsined, and that was before Jenny, there can mind, about seventeen years since."

"Dear me, Margaret, have you not seen a minister here for all that time? Did Mr. Cutter never visit at all? and how did you do for baptisms, and the like?"

"We have nae had a birth or a death for

a' the seventeen year. I dinna believe that even the doctor has ever been in the town a' the time; for this is an uncommon healthy place, Mr. Paxton, and the young folk have ga'en elsewhere."

"So it seems," said I; "and are your families at home with you? They must all be grown up at that rate, and I would hardly expect that ye could keep them all on this farm: they would not have work to do."

"Na; a' the sons and daughters o' our neighbours are away to service and our lads too, but young Tam. We have ane a shepherd in the Low country, and twa were working at their trade in Morpeth the last time we heard, but we'll hear a' about them the night. Ye see the guidman has been here a' his days, and we've saved money, and we thought we could set up the twa lads some-

way near hand—they're baith carpenters—and the guidman has been looking for a place for them for a long time, but hasna fallen in yet wi' ony. Ye ken we folk get nae money—ye ken a' about that, nae doubt, Mr. Paxton—but have a wheen sheep-feedin' on the hills with the rest, and we can keep twa, and whiles three kye on the burnside there that's guid for naething else—that's why the twa lassies are at home, though I wouldna have let them gang ony way as bondagers as the ither lassies have dune. We have nae bondage here, and that's a great blessing."

"It is, indeed, Margaret. Bondage service is the worst of all, and much evil is brought into the country-side through it. I wish we could only get the farmers to give it up. No doubt you have seen much that is bad come from it."

"You may weel say sae," returned Mar-

garet; "it does as muckle ill to the young men as to the lassies, and many a sair heart is made in decent families, by lassies gaun as bondagers as I ken weel. But ye see, sae lang as they can get such big wages, the lasses will be sure to gang; and where there's lassies, the lads will be after them sure enough. It would have been a sair day for the guidman and me, had Jenny or Maggy wanted to leave us for such a service."

There is in Northumberland and in some of the Scottish counties, I may say for the information of the southern reader of this history, a practice which savours a little of old serfdom, which is at the root of the lax morality of the district. Every hind and labourer on the farms, and in many of the villages is bound, in return for his house, to provide a woman labourer to the farmer for so much a day throughout the whole

year—tenpence in summer, and eightpence in winter; and as very often it happens that he has none of his own family fit for the work, he has to hire a woman at large wages to do it; and as the demand is greater than the supply, there cannot be the same strict inquiry into character as otherwise would be the case, and the consequence is, that bad characters from the towns, tempted by the wage—especially in the summer time—hire themselves; and one or two of these about a farm town do great mischief in the families with whom they live, and to all, especially the younger lads and lassies, with whom they come in contact, not only for the time, but for all time. I believe, and have often said it, that if this system was done away with, much improvement in morality would result.

But Jenny had the ham ready by this time, and I sat down and made a hearty meal, the

mother and two daughters—for the younger had come in from the byre, where she had put up my horse—attending to me as if I had been a king. Indeed, such I ever found the case in the district, but here it was so seldom they saw a stranger, and him a priest, that they did not know how to show their homely kindness sufficiently, save by pressing me to eat and drink against my will even. However, even with the fear of repletion before me, I made a hearty meal, determined to resist all the importunities which I knew awaited me in the other houses of the place; for to enter a shepherd's house and not to eat, gives in ordinary cases deadly offence.

After my dinner was over, Maggy was sent away to the hill, to tell the men of my arrival, and I, accompanied by the mother, went to the other houses and saw the people there, and then returned to wait for the

home-coming of Tam and his neighbours. I found the religious spirit strong amongst these good people. They were so shut out from the world, so secluded and by themselves, that all the latitudinarianism of the district around had had no effect upon them, and they maintained a pure faith and pure morality unimpaired.

CHAPTER XII.

"EH, me! there's the guidman himself, and he's his lane," cried one of the neighbours. "No, he's no his lane, but it's no Tam that's wi' him, but a stranger man; wha wilt be?"

As she spoke, the good mother rose, and went to the little window which commanded the hill road: and there, sure enough, was to be seen two passengers, still a long way off, approaching the house at a swift pace. One of them was undeniably a shepherd,

the grey plaid round his shoulder, the sheep-dog at his foot, and the long slinging step at which he walked, put that beyond all doubt, and the people said at once it was the steward. But who the other person that was with him could be, and why he was alone, and not accompanied by his son, appeared to perplex them not a little. The other person, as I could make out, as they came to the top of the opposite hill, was dressed in black, and had the look of an educated man, and was apparently footsore and very weary, and only able to keep up with the more hardy mountaineer by a great effort. The latter seemed very anxious to be home, for he never paused, but dashed down the side of the hill at once, followed by his companion at a trot which gradually, as his momentum increased, became a run, which carried him ahead of the

shepherd, and fairly across the burn to the foot of the ascent, which led up to the house, where he waited, very much blown, till his more experienced companion joined him. We had all got to the door to meet them, and I soon saw that something more than ordinary troubled the steward, for his face was pale and distressed, and there was a painful, yet fierce expression about the eyes that I did not like at all.

"What's the matter? where's Tam?" cried the good wife, as soon as he was within earshot. "Oh, guidman! has aught happened to Tam that he's no wi' you?"

I could not take my eyes off the steward, as he still rapidly advanced, and so did not notice his companion just then. The old man's features were working fearfully, and it seemed to me he did not like to meet his wife's glances. It was evident that some-

thing had happened, which he was afraid to tell. So I advised the neighbour wives to go to their own houses, and allow the news, whatever it was, to be told to Margaret by herself.

" What's the matter? Oh, Tam! tell me what's come of the laddie. Something maun the matter wi' him, or ye wouldna be your lane, and look that gate. Oh, Tam, man, what is't?"

" Whisht, Margaret, come into the house, and I'll tell ye; come in, woman. Oh, Mr. Paxton, I would have been glad to see you at ony time, but never mair than the noo. Come in, Sir."

We all entered, the stranger and all, who took my hand and wrung it without saying a word, still I did not notice more of him, than that he was little in person, and well-educated like. A hush fell upon all the family,

broken only by the sobs of the girls, who knew not what to think. I saw the agony that was depicted in the mother's face, and the feared look with which she waited for the news she longed yet fraid was to hear. After a little pause the steward said abruptly, poor man, he could not, as he wished, find any softer way of stating his bad news.

"Tam's putten in jail at Morpeth."

"Oh!" shrieked the mother and girls in chorus. "Oh! what has he done? Our Tam never did ill to naebody."

"What will he do—whatever will he do? Oh, guidman, what's the matter, what had he done to gie onybody that power ower him? Oh, Tam, Tam, that I should see this day, my puir laddie; but I winna believe that he's guilty o' onything that's bad, I winna, that I winna."

"Whisht, Margaret, whisht," said I, "let's

hear a' that the guidman has to tell us, and then we'll see."

"We selt our sheep only late in the fair, Mr. Paxton, and then Tam and me, we went out o' the town a bit, to see the twa lads—my twa sons, ye ken—for they were working at a new place, a mile or twa out of the town, and as ill-luck would hae it, when we had gotten into the woods, a hare came jumping out of a hedge, and Tam felled it wi' his stick. It had been shot by somebody before, and had a broken leg, and could na have run far, or lived long had it been let alone, and he did it without thinking—weel, we ga'ed on, Tam carrying the beast in his hand; the twa dogs were wi' us, but far ower tired to gang a hunting that day; and when we got a bit farther on, and within sight of the place where the twa lads were working, we saw some collier lads, running as hard as they

could across the field, and men and dogs after them, and one that we had seen behind us ever since we left Morpeth; he used to be a Crookston man, Mr. Paxton, his name's Geordie Hogarth, if he's no sae yet—made up to us, and cried: 'They've been at the poaching again, and the keepers are after them. Oh, fling away that hare, if they come this way, they'll take ye up; fling 't away, Tam, oh, fling 't away, man.' But Tam would not, and I thought it better that he should carry it boldly, and openly, for it's well kent that nane o' us were ever poachers or smugglers. So we ga'ed forward, and the gamekeepers turned to us, when they saw us coming along the road, and they grippit Tam, and called him a poacher, and the collier lad they laid haud o' too, and said that he was well kenned as a vagabond, and so they took us a'—I had gotten haud of

our twa sons, Willie and Peter, on the road —up to the big house, it's a lord's, but I dinna mind his name, and they would hae't that Tam had come a poaching wi' the collier lad, Hogarth, and that what I said about beein a herd, and having selt sheep in the market, was a' lees, and that I had been poaching too. Our sons did a' they could, but they werena believed either, and if it hadna been that the herd of my lord kent me weel, and had gotten our stock often, I would have been pitten in prison too. So they marched off Tam for a' we could say—he had been ta'en red hand, they said—and the collier lad to the jail at Morpeth, to be tried by the Quarter Sessions on Monday; and, puir lad, though his brothers will do all they can for him, whatever will he do."

"I kent he was innocent," said the mother, when her husband had finished his

story; "and they've daured to pit a son of mine in jail for a hare; but they'll a' hear o't; and, puir laddie! maun he lie in the jail till Monday? that'll kill him, puir bairn, puir bairn!"

And though greatly relieved, the mother lifted up her voice and wept bitterly, and in the old man's eyes I saw the moisture form, and drop down his cheeks in big drops, while the young women continued sobbing and wailing, "Puir Tam! our puir Tam!"

As soon as the catastrophe was fairly realized, and while the family were mourning over the disgrace, which they feared would follow this incarceration of Tom, I had time to look more closely at the young man who had come with the old shepherd. I saw features which I knew, a face which could not be mistaken, an old friend; but who, or what his name was, I could not remember

at the moment. He smiled, however, and again held out his hand, which I took and shook warmly.

"You're an old friend; I mind the face —I could never forget it, but I cannot name you."

"Don't you mind Redcross Street, and Hughes, and Peters, and all the rest of them a year or two ago?"

"Wurly! How could I have forgotten— how could *I* have forgotten! Dear me! but I am glad to see you in Northumberland."

"And do you ken this gentleman too, Mr. Paxton?" asked the old shepherd. "Eh me! how strange and providential it was that you were here the day—baith for this, and to give us counsel in our need. Oh! think, Sir, can we do aught for Tam?"

"Ay, tell us what ye think we should do," said the mother.

"Well, I don't see very well: but try to be composed, and we'll talk over the matter, and whatever I can do be sure I will do it; for Tom is innocent of all intention of breaking the law, though he may be legally guilty. I must see, and do all I can for him, and for Hogarth too, for he's a fine fellow, and a good man. I know them both well, Mr. Wurly, and we must use every effort to have them acquitted on Monday. It will be impossible to get measures taken to have him out before then, but I'm much mistaken both in Tom and the other, and of the people of the country too, if any disgrace will ever attach to them for this."

"Perhaps I could be of some use—some more use than you think," said my London friend. "I know something of young Grey, the factor's son, and he has great influence with his father. I am a preacher now,

Paxton, and if you like to get some of the best-known men round about to go up with you on Monday, I'll take your pulpit on Sabbath, and that will give you time to seek out substantial people who know the young man, and I'll give you a letter to Grey besides."

"You're a real good fellow, Wurly," cried I, again taking his hand. "Well, I'm the young man's pastor, and he has always been very regular and well-behaved, so it behoves me to do all I can; and God helping, I'll do it willingly."

"God bless you, Sir—God in Heaven bless you," said the mother, sobbing again, while the father seized Wurly's hand, and wrung it warmly.

"But we must eat: baith the gentleman and I are hungry," said the steward. "So, guidwife, get us some meat, and bring out

the bottle, and Mr. Wurly will take a dram. Little did I think, when I fell in wi' you, sticking in yon black moss, that ye were a friend of our priest's or could so far help us."

"The Lord be thanked!" I heard one of the girls say, "Tam'll soon be out and hame if the priest takes it up."

So with a measure of composure which they little hoped for, they set about preparing savoury rashers of bacon, and slices of mutton ham, and soon Wurly and his host were busily employed; with the keen appetite of the hills. The mother slipped away to tell her neighbours and receive their sympathy, while I walked out to think what I should do. Many plans suggested themselves to me, but at last I thought that the best way was for me to set out for Wark, which was only about as far as the Manse from where I was, and consult John Ogle,

leaving Wurly as my substitute for the prayer-meeting I had promised to have that night. My plan was this: to get John and as many farmers as knew the young man, to sign a strong letter to the Justices, and another to the factor who had committed Tom; and if John and Mr. Hall, Tom's master, would do it, to get them to go to Morpeth with me, and if possible, free the two lads and send them home. So I returned to the house, as soon as I had determined on my course.

The meal was over, and all cleared away, and the steward was pressing my friend Wurly to take a glass of toddy when I entered. I sat down with them, and briefly told them of my plan, which was highly approved of; and one of the young women went away to saddle, and bring out my horse; for young women in Northumberland are

as good at these offices as the men. Margaret then told me her purpose, to start very early in the morning for Wooler, and get the coach. "For I maun be near my laddie; I canna let him be in that ill place his lane."

"And can ye give or get a horse for Mr. Wurly? You will have to ride down to the Manse in the evening; and Peggy, my maid, will make you comfortable. Perhaps some of the other men would go down with him," said I to the shepherd, "for he will not know the road."

"He'll no steer a fit frae this the night. We have a good room that's aye keeped for the maister, and he shall hae it. Blessings on him, and you baith, in coming to hearten and help us when we needed it sae muckle. Na, na, the young gentleman will stop here a' the night, and he needna trouble Peggy at a' till ye're at hame yersel; he can stay

here till Sabbath, and as lang as he will stay, he shall not only be welcome, but we'll a' be proud of the honour. I'll no be at hame mysel, but the lassies can manage finely, and Betty will look in to see that a' is dune rightly. Ye *maun* stay wi' us, Sir."

"We'll get Bob Trummell to gang down on the pony, as soon as he comes hame, to tell Peggy, so that she'll no weary for you," said the old man; "and now God bless and prosper your wark."

"Well, Thomas," I said, as soon as I saw that Wurly would prefer to stay, "I have one more thing to advise: get you away as soon in the morning as you can, down to Mr. Hall, and tell him all about this, and what I am doing, and try if he will go with Ogle and me, on Monday; or maybe, he could meet us in Morpeth, whatever way he likes, but he must go if it be possible."

So I left them amid a shower of blessings from all the inhabitants; for the different families there were as one, and evil to one individual was evil to all. I rode away from Glenhead towards Wark, on my mission to free Tom, Thomas Carr's son.

It may be supposed that I made too much of this case, but I did not; for I mind well, that not so long before, a young man I knew well, was put in jail for a long time, by a bench of game-preserving magistrates, for a less offence than poor Tom had committed, and had become so much contaminated in prison, that no good came of him after; and I feared that this young man should meet the same fate, so I determined I should spare neither Donald my pony, nor myself, in my efforts to save Tom.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHEN I did reach Wark, which was just in the gloaming of a summer's evening, I mind well the commotion I put them all into. John and his wife, and young Jervis, were all in the garden, looking at some flowers, which had been new transplanted there; and so they saw me, when yet I was out of speaking distance, and all sorts of surmises began to pass through their minds, as to the unlooked-for, and very late visit,

and when I drew near enough to hear their voices.

"Od, man, Mr. Paxton, ye frightened us a', are ye weel enough? Nothing has happened to ye? Maybe ye're only feared of the road ower the moor? Or is the powny that tired, that it'll no gang past the gate? Ony gate, man, Mathie, I'm glad ye've come. Here's Peter Jervis, and Ann, were only saying this very night, how lang it was since they had seen ye. Get down, man. Here, Rowlie," for the old Wark name still maintained itself, though the surnames had mostly gone; "here, Rowlie, take the priest's horse and pit him into the riding stable, and supper up Donald, for ye'll stay all night. Shake down plenty of straw, and get some hay, too, do you hear."

"Yes, John, I've come to stay all night with you, and I want you to help me with

something. Both you and Peter Jervis can be of use in it, but I'll tell you after. We must go to Mrs. Ogle now, and maybe she'll give me a cup of tea, for I have ridden down from Glenhead, and I'm tired."

"Come awa' then, but it's supper time, man, the tea's been ower this three hours; it's nine o'clock at night noo."

"Well, never mind that, Mrs. Ogle will get me some tea, and then I'll tell you what I want."

We went into the house, and soon after the welcome was over, and it was always a hearty one to me there, I got the refreshment I so much needed, and told my story. Few farmers were there in that country-side then, but had suffered from the iniquitous game laws, and but fewer still whose hinds and labourers had not been injured by the punish-

ments for their infraction. So I had an attentive audience, and an instant appreciation of the danger that impended over young Tom Carr.

"It's lucky ye came the night," said John. "Peter and me are gaun up to Morpeth to sell beasts and sheep on Monday. Peter's are away ower the hills, and mine gang in the morning; and we were thinking o' setting off ourselves, to buy some kyloes at Biteabout in the morning, so that we can manage the business grand. Od, I ken the lad very weel, a tall, fair-haired lad that sits in the wast gallery, just opposite us. Jane, ye will have noticed him, he's aye sae attentive. I've kent the auld man a' my days, Mathew, and I'll help him, ye may depend."

"But I'm anxious about this Hogarth, too," said I, "and I assure you he is a decent

lad, and a weel doing, and I know he was only up there seeing his brother, so he could never be a regular poacher."

"I dinna ken sae weel about him; colliers are different frae our folk. But if he belanged to the Moss Pit, ye should see Mr. Thomas the factor, and my lord—ye ken my Lord Kirton?—and that minds me, I'll speak to our factor, he's a Grey too, and maybe kens Lord Carlisle's man. But had ye no better write the letter? ye maun do that part, ye ken."

So I wrote two strong letters, and signed them both, and John and Peter did the same; and we sat talking and planning, how we were to do, and where to meet on the Monday and all that, when all of a sudden, Peter Jervis cried:

"I have it; I see how it can all be done easily. How could we not think of this

before? We must get old Cully of Coupland, he's a magistrate too, and his brother of Fowberry, there's sure to be one of them in the market, at least, I never yet was in Morpeth market without seeing one of them. We must get Cully."

"Cully's the man," shouted John, "Coupland's the next estate to Glenhead, if Glenhead's no on't. We must hae Cully."

"Well, I know something of him," said I, quietly, "and I'll call on him, and Lord Kirton, if you do the rest."

John agreed, and so after our family worship we separated for the night.

John Ogle, and Jervis were away the next morning long before I was up; and very soon after the usual family breakfast, I set off after them. I went home first, and up to the Kirton, where, having got the rector to accompany me, I saw Lord Kirton, who,

though a keen game preserver himself, and one who punished very heavily every trespasser he found out on his own estate, was yet not at all pleased, that one of the best and steadiest colliers of his pit should be imprisoned innocently. He would have been very severe, he said, had he found Hogarth really poaching on his own ground, but would not hear of anybody else meddling with his men; and so he wrote to the chairman of the bench a very strong letter, telling all about the young man's character, and all that I had said of the case, and urging him to acquit him, and promising that he would make his keepers have an eye on him, so that if he was a poacher, he should be sure to be found out and punished for it another time.

I left Lord Kirton's, well pleased with the letter, which he gave to me, and not a little

gratified with the way in which he had received me, for though he was an old vagabond as I well knew, I had never had admittance to his house before, though we always used to have a chat when we met on the road; and he was a lord, and that covered a multitude of sins then, and does so still, in the estimation of all. I set out then for Mr. Cully's. When I reached Coupland Castle, I found I was within two miles of Glenhead, and could easily go over there after I had seen the Laird. Mr. Cully received me very well. He was a man that had commenced life as a small farmer, and by improvements in husbandry, by careful cultivation, by improvement of his farm implements, and cattle, had raised himself to be a considerable landed proprietor, and a wealthy man; and was then the greatest and the best farmer in the three counties,

Northumberland, Roxburgh, and the Merse, and he was a stout Presbyterian withal, and had never forgotten the lowly degree from which he sprung. Mat Cully, as he was affectionately called by the country tradesmen, was a man who deserved his wealth and elevation, for he bore his honours meekly, "the fient a pride, nae pride had he," and he was willing and ready to be frank and kindly with the working people, for which reason both he and his brother of Fowberry were great favourites, and universally well spoken of. They had found the north part of Northumberland a wilderness, they left it by their precept and example, a garden. Mr. Cully would have me to dine with him, he retained all the Northumbrian respect for the priest, and was overflowing in his hospitality, which might be a fault in the eyes of more cultivated people; but not

then, nor never since in mine, though I have been as much distressed, or to use the new-fangled word, bored with it, as anybody I know has. Well, Mat—so I cannot help irreverently speaking of Mathew Cully, Esq., of Coupland Castle, it was a name of affection not of familiarity, which the country had given him—entered *totis viribus* into my scheme, he had not intended to go to the market, but he would do so. "For why," said he, "Hall is my tenant, and before Hall came here at all, I knew old Tam Carr. His father was my father's shepherd, when we lived west, your way, Mr. Paxton. What could the auld man mean by no coming to me at once?"

"Don't blame him, Mr. Cully," said I. "I was there when he came home with the news, and they were all so much distressed, that I agreed as I had a young friend to

preach for me, to take all the work of this upon myself, and besides, the old man was almost taken too."

"Weel, weel, Mathew—dinna wonder at me calling you that, man. I'm an auld man, and have been accustomed to speak so all my days, and I kent your father before you were born many an year, as one of the decentest men, and best shepherds in the country-side—I see all that, but he should have come to me, he might have kent that I would not let one of my own people be sent to jail if I could help it."

"Call me as you like, Mr. Cully, only help me in this," said I, in answer, "I have known one young man ruined so, as this one may be, and I have a right, and a duty as a minister, to look after my people; and, Sir, I count it a privilege so to do; so you must aid me, and not take it ill that Thomas

Carr spoke to me about his son first of all."

"I never would, and never will," said the old gentleman. "Young man, I am glad to hear a priest speak in that way. I'm a member of Carton Meeting, and as lang as I can gang, I'll stick by Mr. Ayton, but I will aye wish you well. I'm proud to have had you here, I only wish the mistress had been at home; but you'll come back and see us soon, will you not?"

"That I will," said I; "you may judge I'll not be very long of putting your hospitality to the test, for I shall be up here oftener than I have been, and more particularly till all this is settled."

"Weel, Mathew—excuse me again, I cannot help speaking that way—the oftener ye come, and the sooner the better. Now you want to go over to Glenhead, I'm sure

ye do, we'll ride together. I would like to see my old friend, and tell him myself that I will look after his son."

So we got the horses, and rode over to the little secluded dell, myself quite in love with the old farmer, who so thoroughly entered into the thing I had so much at heart. It did not take us long to reach the place; Mr. Cully's mettled pony put Donald on his mettle too; for as I have said before, Donald would never be beat, and thus in a far shorter time than it would have taken me myself, we were riding up past the clump of trees to the little hamlet. The sound of horses, as was to be expected, brought out the whole population, including Mr. Wurly, and our horses were taken with an extraordinary degree of *empressement*, for the laird's first visit was a thing to be noted and remembered.

"Everything is in good train," said I to Wurly apart; "but where's the old man?"

"He's just come home, looking terribly wearied, but Hall's to be there on Monday. I say, Paxton, I never had such lodgings before; though my old landlady *has* left me her heir, I would give my London property for this any day."

"Ay, and your London attendance too, no doubt," said I. "It's not often that you'll get people to wait upon you for love, as these lassies will do. So, you've been very comfortable, Wurly?"

"Comfortable! it's a poor word, Paxton; could they have done any extravagant thing that would have given me pleasure they would have done it. Then the bed: I've been most of my life in lodgings, and good lodgings, too, considering, but the like of it I never saw; why I was over head and ears

in feathers, and it is so pleasant to be the principal person of a whole town. I never was more than a mere cipher before, that I feel quite resolved to get the 'maister' farmer, what do you call him, to make over his interest in that room to me, to draw my London rents, and to live here *inter pastrolibus*, all my life."

"Yes, Wurly, all the fine weather," said I, laughing heartily as much at his Latin as his enthusiasm. "Get a church down among us, man, and then you can come to such places, if you are not compelled to live among them always, as often as you like. But we are neglecting my great conquest; come, Wurly, let us see old Carr and him."

We found the old shepherd and the old laird as friendly as possible, and the former very much more assured than he had been

all the day. Mr. Cully had told him that he would take care of Tom, and he was content; and the old gentleman, meaning really all he said, was promising all kinds of things, and apparently as glad to see his old schoolfellow, as if they were as much equals in wealth as in kindliness. Some sort of pride or shyness had kept the steward from speaking to the old gentleman for years, but now he poured out his wishes for his two sons, and Mr. Cully promised, for them also, to do something; so that really there was a likelihood that my visit to Coupland Castle might accomplish more than I had in view when I rode up to its gate.

I left with Mr. Cully, and rode home straightway, very proud of my success so far, and anxious to hear how John Ogle had got on. Everything, as yet, had been propitious, and fortified with the presence

of one, and the strong letter of another of the chief gentry of the neighbourhood, I felt sure of success one way or other, if some counter-turn did not come in the way.

My maid Peggy was pleased enough that I should be of use to the young man, but by no means so that I should be riding about the country "like a riding gauger," as she expressed it, and so she was not contented when I expressed my intention of setting off on the Saturday for Morpeth; but I overruled all her objections. For though stout farmers, accustomed to much riding, could easily ride for half-a-dozen hours, and be quite able to appear in the market or the court afterwards, it was more than I could do, and besides, John Ogle and Peter Jervis meant to stay on the Sabbath night at Greenfield, better than half-way, and to go up early in the morning; so I

determined to take the coach that passed on the Saturday, which, after leaving a note for Mr. Wurly, I did, and reached Morpeth that same evening.

CHAPTER XIV.

MONDAY morning found all our friends on the spot in readiness for the opening of the Quarter Sessions. I had seen Margaret Carr on the Saturday night, and the two culprits on the Sabbath, after the forenoon service, and I found that the brothers had engaged a Newcastle attorney to defend Tom. At first I thought this was all right, but afterwards I saw that they had made a great mistake in so doing; for the Justices were rather thick-headed, and the appearance of

the lawyer gave an air of suspicion they thought to the case, and so they were less inclined to listen to the urgent testimonials which we had to present in favour of the young men.

However, we were all ready with our documents, prepared also to give *vivâ voce* testimony to the good conduct of both the lads. After some other cases of a similar kind had been disposed of — indeed, it seemed to me as if poaching was the chief crime of the county, and its repression the chief duty of the magistrates of that district—their case came on, and the keepers who had apprehended the youths gave their evidence; very criminatory I mind it was, and not at all true, if old Thomas Carr was to be believed. Then the attorney subjected them to a close cross-examination, which, in the opinion of us all, reduced their

testimony to just nothing, but the fact of Tom having been found by them after a hard chase with the hare in his possession, and Hogarth as his companion; and then the lawyer made a short speech, and called witnesses for the defence; but first he had fixed all the keepers, very much against the wish of the bench, down to the particular hour they first saw the poachers, and the time they had apprehended Tom, who first of all proved that the shepherds were in Morpeth market at the time first mentioned, and to within an hour of the apprehension; and then the old man, Thomas Carr, proved the facts of the case, and showed that neither of the two had ever been in the field at all, and that the keepers were either wilfully perjuring themselves, or entirely in error.

The magistrates were in a dilemma, and

consulted together for a while, but the hare was too valuable an animal to be lost, and the keepers too important to be discredited by an old shepherd, and so they at last found both guilty. Then the attorney called on us to bear witness to the character of the youths, and urged a slight punishment, if punished they must be ; and he did this in a tone which showed such manifest disgust with all the proceedings, that I feared it would rather have the effect of increasing than diminishing the sentence. So it was, for I heard the words "six weeks" mentioned two or three times, and the bench was upon the point of passing a sentence of imprisonment for that time, when Mr. Cully, who was sitting on the bench, whispered something to the leading magistrate, which made him grow red in the face, and bend down to the clerk, who sat at the table below him.

They conversed for a little, and then the chairman raised himself up again, looking flushed and angry, and baffled like; and the upshot was, that the two lads were to be bound over to keep the peace for six months —though what for, the attorney could get no answer. Mr. Cully paid the fine for them both at once, and I myself and Mr. Hall became surety for Carr, and John Ogle and me for Hogarth; so we saw them dismissed from the bar, free and scatheless. It was much against the attorney's wish that we submitted: he would have been better pleased had the heavier sentence been passed, and had already drawn up notice of appeal, which, he said, would have been sure to be successful, and would have covered the justices with shame. He had no great favour for them, and I verily believe, would have been greatly pleased to have some hand

in their humiliation; but it was far more important to keep the lads from the contamination of the county jail, and to send them home unscathed in morals, and so we were well content with the lesser evil of the two, and so was our lawyer when he knew our reason.

Many and bitter were the comments of us all on the justices. Everybody, though some not so well and truly as others, can form some notion of the value of evidence, and we could easily see that only a prejudiced mind could find them guilty on the keepers' word. But we were not ill-content, nevertheless, and all went home again, pleased that the lads were free once more.

Mr. Cully, I may as well say here, did not forget his promise to old Carr: at the next Whit Sunday, and when all this had been forgotten, one of the young men—they

had both got married in the meanwhile—got the joiner's shop and business of the Coupland estate, and the other was able to commence business down near Tweedmouth, some way about East Ord, and both of them throve well and prospered, while Tom stayed at home with his father, and was to be Mr. Cully's shepherd, when he became experienced enough to take charge of that gentleman's flocks. The two girls were soon after married, too; and as I was their minister, I performed the ceremony for both of them on the same day, over the Border, at the house of a friend of theirs at Lennel, on Tweedside. It was a great and merry company that had assembled, and as Wurly was again in the country, I sent for him to be with me, for he had been much taken with the kindness of these good people, and besides, he was a lover of the peculiar customs of our country

folks, and so he came with all his heart, loaded with presents for the brides—some of them unsuitable enough—and entered with all his spirit, and he liked *fun* well, into the scene; and though we did not stay very long, but returned home to the Manse early in the evening, he saw enough to enable him to write a very pleasing article—at least, I was told so, by those who were well able to judge, for I never saw it—on the marriage customs of the Border, which appeared in one of the London magazines of that time, and was received with great favour by the metropolitan literati.

I shall finish this episode by a letter from old Margaret Carr, which she sent to her son at Ord, and which will, better than I can do, set forth what spirit these Northumberland shepherd matrons are of, and show how far, even at that early time, edu-

cation had progressed among them, and it must be borne in mind that old Margaret Carr was now past the three score years and ten, and so had learned all she knew of the art of spelling and writing some sixty years before. It is to her son and daughter-in-law at Ord.

"March the 7, 1810.

"Dear Son and Doughter, these lines leavs us all wel at present thanks Be to God for that, hoping to find you all the sam, and we receaved your leter, and was glad to hear you war all wel, and desirs to retorn our respects for it, and we hop you hav receaved a leter from your sister, to which we need not rit in that cas. But they are all as well as we can expek at present in her situation, and we stop in our places as we was, both at Dorenton and Glenhead. The last

time we heard from your Brother John's femely they were all well, and now Dear son and Doughter you made me very glad and proud both of recaving such a leter, and I believe in its truth, and rejoice in them, for it is the spiret that Quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing, that is cirkimseson and the passover that is meant, the flesh, but the words that Christ Jesus speaks unto us, th'ar spirit and thay ar Life, Saint John 6 chapter, and 63 vars, and that is Baptisum and the Lord's Super, it is written in the Prophets and they shall be all taught of God, every man therefore that hath heard and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me 45 vers sam chapter, I have reason to be thankful under the hand of a merciful God for every merciful goodness we enjoy for I may say with David, Never the less, continuely O Lord I am with thee, he doth me

hold by my right hand, and still upholdeth me, that with his counsel while I live will me conduck and gide, and receave me into his glory, for the Bible and testament is God's free grace that worketh faith in us, in our eftul-caling (effectual calling?) having our loins girt about with truth, and the brest plate of rightusness, and our feet shod with the prapsons (preparation) of the Gospel of peace, and above all the sheild of Faith where with we shall be abell to quansh all the firey darts of the weked, and the helmet of salvason, the sword of the spiret which is the word of God praying all ways with all prayr and supklacion (supplication) and that we add to our faith virtu, and to virtu Nolig (knowledge) and to nolig temprencs, and to temprencs patience, and to patience godliness and to godliness Brotherly cindness, and to brotherly cindness charity, so that

we may nether (be) barren nor unfrufull (unfruitful) in the nolig of our God. But I cannot say with pall (Paul?) in that for he says that his own rightusness was cirksimson (circumcision) and the passover, but we have all the sam free ofered grace of God in Christ that he had, for the Lord is our shepherd and leadeth us in thos green pasters of his son's gospel of truth though we walck in the darck vailey of death, let us fear no eavill; but I surely have not been so ill as you have been informed, two or three days is as much as I have been off worck, but I know nothing but what they tell me; now our best respecks is to you all, and you will let my grandson John and Mary and Elenor (know) all our cind love to them, and now we remain your loving father and mother, Thomas and Margaret Carr, Glenhead. William Ormston and

James Ormston, Ewert Brigent best respeks to all of you."*

Margaret's letter was in answer to one telling her of her son, who was always a decent, well-doing man, having become still more serious than he had ever been; and though it does look a little confused, and to contain more than one *non sequitur*, it shows, I think, how powerfully the religion of the Gospel had impressed her, and this, it must be remembered, when religion was at its lowest ebb, in Northumberland; when its rectors rode to the fox-hunt, as regularly as any squire in the land, and its dissenters—

* The above is a true copy word for word, with only such alterations in the spelling as may make it intelligible, of a worthy Northumbrian matron only dead within the last few years.

of the older class, at least—were almost all of them as low in theology, as they were in practice, and that's saying a great deal.

CHAPTER XV.

I WOULD not let Wurly take any more long strolls that week; he only came to me at the end of it, and, indeed, he was very anxious himself to be as well prepared as possible, on the Sabbath; for he had agreed to preach another day, and not being very much in the habit of preaching, he took more time to get up a sermon than I did, though he was undoubtedly a sharper, and cleverer fellow than me, in ordinary things. On the Sabbath he preached a very good

sermon, it was really very refreshing to me to hear it, and to the people too ; and so after it was done, he was told by very many, John Ogle being of the number. The two lads that we had rescued from the Morpeth keepers, and the county jail, were there, too, and I saw as soon as the meeting was out, that they were surrounded by hosts of their young acquaintances, for the story had spread far, and wide, through the country, and everybody was speaking of the way I had done, and I fancy that the two lads did not lessen, but increase rather, the feeling of the people in my favour; and so far it was very well, for a minister never loses by identifying himself with his flock in their times of emergency; and I was bond for both the lads.

Wurly and I set out on Monday to visit the colliers of the district, who were quite

as peculiar in their way as the hinds of the country-side. Their houses were quite of the same kind, size, and class, but they had no cows; at least few of the colliers of Carton Moor, or of Kirton either, had a cow, I don't believe above two or three at the most. Their houses were dirty and more sluttish, and in almost every one of them, some of the men were in bed asleep, or preparing there for. There was not the least appearance of regularity about their habits. Some were coming in from, and others going out to, their work at all times; and we could not help thinking that this irregularity must very much increase the expense of their living, and the discomfort of their dwellings.

As we went on, the men that had gotten their first sleep over—for colliers have always two sleeps, the latter being generally just before the time for going back to the pit

again — followed us wheresoever we went, with the greatest freedom and *nonchalance* imaginable. Wurly, I saw, was a good deal annoyed, but it did not trouble me at all, this importunity, for I knew it was the people's way—a very troublesome one doubtless—of showing kindness, and when I first went to visit among them, I did not like it very much either. At this time there was the other reason, of the way I had put myself about for Geordie Hogarth; and though it was at the Kirton Colliery that he wrought, the distance was so small that though the characters of the people were very distinct, they seemed almost one community and sympathized fully with each other.

We went from house to house of all those who came to Crookston Meeting, everywhere hailed with thanks and wel-

comes, and everywhere finding the same sluttish, irregular appearance. There is one other feature that I have omitted, which likewise was universal, that is, the huge coal fire, that burned in every house. I called Wurly's attention to that, for I intended to show him the house of a hind, on our way home, and I wished him to take notice of the difference between them. In one house we found two young men, just come in from the pit, and were witnesses of their not very ceremonious, but very thorough ablutions. There is little doubt that it is owing to these, that, notwithstanding their peculiar employment, their health is so long good. It is true that numbers of the older men we saw were asthmatical, and it was very painful to hear their breathing; but still, there

did appear a look of robust health, and strength, which, considering the pit work during the morning, and the disorderly habits of their houses, was not a little surprizing.

"How peculiarly developed these fellows shoulders are," said Wurly to me, after we had got clear away from the place, and the crowd, which at one time had shown some apparent intention of coming down the hill with us. "Did you notice how broad and sinewy the upper part of their bodies are? I never saw the like of it before."

"It is, indeed. I always noticed that they differed in appearance from other people; but never remarked what was the peculiarity."

"And just look how weak the legs are in proportion. See that fellow that's coming up, he's got the shoulders of a

Hercules, and is out of all proportion weak in the legs. Can it be their work, Paxton?"

"Very likely," said I; "but I know the man, and he'll tell us somewhat of their modes of labour."

So I spoke to Peter Robison, when we met him, told him who Mr. Wurly was, and got him to go across the moor with us, to show us the nearest road, which he did very cheerfully.

"What kind of a pit is the one you're working in?" said I, to break the ground for Wurly.

"She's no that bad," Peter answered, "an it were na for the waeter. But we're sinking up on the moss, yonder, for she's about wrought out."

"And what may be the thickness of the seam of coals?" asked Wurly, who had

been down some of the Newcastle pits, and was more *au fait* than me about these things.

"Ten inches we've come to already; but we hope to get on the main seam, when she's down far enough," said Peter, "and it's about twenty inches."

"Bless me! but how do you work at all?" exclaimed Wurly.

"Whatever way we best can," returned Peter, "whiles on our sides, lying a' our length; whiles kneeling on our knees, when we can get room enough; but we oftenest in this country-side, have to lie down. It's very hard work, Sir; and folk little think o't, when they speak o' us being a bad set, that we're lazy, and a' that. If ony body was to do the day's work I had this morning, I'm gey sure they would be glad enough to get to bed when they came home. But we get used to it."

"And how deep is your pit?" said I, for I felt sympathy with the man, and, indeed, had ever done so with the whole race of them.

"No that deep; no near so deep as the pits in the low country; she's no abune twelve fathoms.

"Oh, that is nothing," said Wurly, "when I was at Newcastle I was more than a hundred fathoms down; but then the seams were larger and thicker than yours. Have you any of the damps here? Mr. Paxton says that you have accidents enough. What causes them?"

"I never heard of fire in ony of the pits hereabout," said Peter. "Down at the sea-side, they gang as deep as eighty fathoms, and they have fire there; but there's nae pit but that one in this country, that I ever heard o't in. We've had the chokedamp

once or twice in my time, but it did little ill to ony o' us; it was it gave my faither the asthma, he aye says, but I think it's just as likely to hae been the weather and the waeter, for our waeter's unco bad."

"But about the accidents that have happened?" said I.

"We have nae sae mony as ither folk," Peter answered. "Whiles a man gets his leg broken by a fall of the stone. There's my brother Tam, he's gaun about again now, he got his broken that way; and I've kent twa or three killed in the same way, that's by the roof falling on them when hewing; but the warst ever I kent, or heard of here away, has been when the rope brake, and the men fell to the bottom, or the basket fell on them. I mind of twa of that kind in my ain time."

"Was it carelessness then, want of proper

attention to the strength of the ropes, that caused that?" said Wurly.

"We aye thought so, but durst not say it," answered Peter; "and then the maister provided for the widows and the bairns, and it's no common, so that naebody ever complained. But I'll have to turn now, I'm in charge of part of the pit, and I have to gang down in an hour or sae, so I maun turn here. Good day, Sir; good day, Mr. Paxton." And so Peter turned and retraced his steps. I saw that he did not like the turn the conversation had taken.

"Well, I see now what makes these men so broad shouldered," said Wurly, after a pause. "What a pity it is that their bodies are not all equally developed, but it's something the same in all trades after all. I could not help thinking though, what splendid soldiers these fellows would make

if they were as strong in the legs as they are broad in the shoulders."

"But here we are at Andrew Dickson's of the Moor," said I. "You see here, Wurly, the oldest family in the country-side. People who can trace their lineage as far back as the riding times; and from that little height, just behind their house, you can see for miles all around."

"What a splendid view," burst from Wurly, when we reached the place; and so it was. The country beyond gradually descended for many miles, till, on one side, it was shut in by the sea, and on the other by the hills; and round the whole semi-circle, from right to left, for thirty miles, the whole district lay before us, covered with waving corn-fields, dotted with young plantations, and brown moors, and having the Carr, for better than twelve miles, winding

through them like a great serpent. At a single glance, one could see how valuable such a station as this would be in the old times; and Wurly at once asked: "What is the name of this place? it must, in this warlike country, have some distinctive name."

"Truly it has," said I. "Do you notice that no enemy could come nearer than six or seven miles without being seen? And you see those black crags and old towers, yonder to the east and the north; these sent up word, by night and day, to this place, of what was going on further down on the Border line. This is an old Border station, and here, in former times, the ancestors of Andrew Dickson continually kept watch."

"But what is the name of the place?" demanded Wurly, hastily; "it ought to have some fine old name."

"It is known now as the Watchlaw; I fancy of old it was called the Spylaw. There used to be an old peel just along there a little, where the house now stands, but it has been gone for more than two hundred years. At least it's two hundred years since those cottages were built. Now let us go down homewards again, for the Dicksons are very tedious people."

So we went away down the moor, intending to call at a hind's house that I wanted him to see, and to take a ruined castle on our way. Among the ruins, Wurly was quite in his element, and began to point out beauties which I had never noticed before, though for a considerable time past I had been seeing it every week. As soon as he saw the ruined towers, he began to construct the whole in his mind, and to describe it to me, showing how it had been

fortified, and defended, and to prove in what king's reign it was built, from the peculiar style and decorations of its half-ruined windows and doors; and then when we came at last to the entrance tower, he noticed a shield sculptured over the gateway, and after a little study, he told me by what family it had been built, to whom it had belonged at least, though the thing looked to me like some of the daftlike ornaments, in which the old masons delighted.

After he had satiated his curiosity, which took a long time, and which wearied me not a little, for I was not at all accustomed to walk so much, I took him to the hind's house, where we would get a rest, and a drink of milk. The house would horrify the people of the present day, though I know there are plenty such like, and even worse all over Northumberland. Wurly was

shocked not a little, for the houses at Glenhead were very greatly superior, though no doubt of the same kind. As we entered, the first thing we saw was a cow, the byre being a part of the house, and the floor was of earth, uneven and rugged; the walls were bare and unplastered, and those he had not seen before; I wished him to see with his own eyes, how my people were accommodated, and therefore had brought him here. But for all Wurly's horror, for all the bare walls, the rough earthen floor, the window that would not open, and the cow, but the house, the cottage was far from uncomfortable, and the goodwife set bread, and cheese, and milk before us, as neatly as if we had been in the farmer's parlour; and everything was so clean, that we both of us did full justice to our homely refreshment. The sides of bacon hanging from the rafters, and the substan-

tial appearance of everything in the house, helped to dissipate Wurly's feeling; but I could still see that he felt that it was not so good as many stables, and was not a little indignant that good people should be so housed.

We had some little conversation with Betty, but as it was about the bondage which I have already spoken of in another place, I shall not set it down here; and so after we had rested awhile, we went our ways.

"Paxton," said Wurly, as soon as we had got into the fields, on our way home again, "I would not have missed that house for anything. It is quite unique to me, I never saw the like; and the contrast is so great between it, and the other houses that we have seen to-day—though it is by far the most primitive of them all—yet how much

more comfortable, clean, and regular it looked. And the fire, did you notice it? it seemed only a spark compared to the furnaces up yonder."

"Well, I'm glad you're pleased."

"Yes, I'm very much pleased; it's a crying shame that people should be condemned to live in such houses. But what is worse is that remnant of serfdom; I had not the least idea of such a state of things."

"Little wonder, it is a monstrous anomaly, which ought to be swept away; but you see the people have got habituated to it, and by its means the farmers have always labourers at hand."

"I dare say, but still it's hard to make labourers suffer for the farmers' convenience, and to keep a person to work for him, only

when he needs her, is too bad. But what might be the rent of that house?"

"Perhaps thirty shillings or two pounds a year."

"And what the wages of the men—how much a week?"

"They're all hired by the year down in this country, Wurly, from Whit Sunday to Whit Sunday, and are paid mostly in kind—so many bolls of oats, so many of barley, and of peas, and a small quantity of wheat, and then the keep of a cow all the year, and a few, a very few, pounds in money, and that is all."

"Bless me! I could not have believed that such a state of things existed in England; and yet but for the house, the people looked comfortable too."

"Seeing's believing, you know. But what

did you think of the appearance of the people in the Meeting?"

"I thought they looked very comfortable, and respectable like, no appearance of want about them, at all. Coarse a little, maybe, but well drest on the whole. But surely you don't mean to say, Paxton, that those people were all hinds?"

"Crookston congregation consists mostly of hinds," I answered: "there's not above fifty, or sixty, who are better off than the people whose house we have just left, and there are many much worse off than them; and more than that, there is hardly one of these people you saw yesterday, even among the younger portion of them, who have not a good black dress for funerals, besides their ordinary Sabbath clothes; and all that on the wages I have told you."

"I could never have believed it, I never was more astonished in my life. Seeing *is* believing, for had I not seen, nothing could have convinced me, that those comfortable looking people were living in such houses, and on such wages, or that the lot of these hinds could be other than a miserable one."

"Of course it is a disgrace to the landlords that such houses should still exist, and that there should still be such a system as that of bondage; but still the hinds with us are a comfortable race, notwithstanding all their drawbacks and hardships."

"So I see, but it's not easy to believe that, unless one sees it," and Wurly fell into a brown study which lasted till we reached the Manse, which I forbore to interrupt.

On the following days of that week, having got the loan of a gig, I took Wurly to all

the places round about, that seemed to me at all likely to interest him. Down to see my old enemy, James, even—the first time it was I had ever called on him—and to Wark, and across the Border into Scotland; and then, after another Sabbath, his third at Crookston, we went up to see my father, where we spent a couple of days, and then I came home leaving him there, for, as usual, he made himself much liked by the old people, and might if he had so chosen, stayed for months here and there, over the country, with the different farmers on whom he called.

Wurly left the country, however, without me seeing him again. I heard that he had paid a farewell visit, and had stayed another night at Glenhead, but he did not come to see me, and so I settled down again into my usual quiet, having been much pleased

with the renewal of our intercourse, and not ill-pleased, if I must confess, when I was myself again, for it did not do for me to be stravaging the country, as for a fortnight I had done.

CHAPTER XVI.

A FEW months after this—months passed without any incident of note, save that John Ogle at Wark, was coming into a fine family, and that he was my steadiest supporter, in every time of need, and his house had become a place where I could go at any time, assured of sympathy in every trouble, and help of every kind when any emergency occurred—I mind well the first baptism in that household, which neither Jane nor John would let anybody perform but me. The

old man at Birdhope Craig should have come down, and gotten the name, but they both, even at the risk of offending him, would have me to baptize the little girl, and get the name myself. In the English Church I would have been called the god-father, but as we Presbyterians have cast away all such Popish mumeries, I was only the name-father of little Mathewina Paxton. Nobody needed to be angry at the preference, for Mrs. Ogle's family rapidly increased, and there was need almost to invent names for the new comers before long.

It was a gusty winter Sabbath afternoon, that I rode down to Wark in company with John Ogle to baptize this child. The Meeting had been thinly attended that day, as, indeed, it often was during the winter months, for the most of my people had far to come, and the roads then were often

very soft and heavy, so that they could not walk so far in the broken weather, and then sit with wet clothes and wet feet in the Meeting, with any comfort; I used, however, often to go to some of the outlying places, and preach a short sermon in the evening, in the largest house of the place, and I found that these extra sermons were very profitable. I always did so when there were baptisms. I never could sympathize with those lazy ministers, who, with a show of zeal, made the folk bring the infants four or five miles to the Meeting, in all weathers, to save themselves the trouble, but liked to get such an occasion for a second service, for I liked preaching well then. The road that John and I took was a very bleak and bare one, after we had left the neighbourhood of Crookston, a range of low hills on the left, and of wooded knolls on the right, and a

great extent of marshy meadows between, where the hostile armies first encountered, in that great battle of which I have spoken; but though in the summer the road is pleasant enough, and is a good one, being that by which the coaches went from Edinburgh to Newcastle and London; in the winter, when all the trees are bare, and the marsh partly overflowed, it has a very dismal and disconsolate aspect, not at all cheering. We were both well mounted, however, knew the road well, and had plenty to converse about, so that we did not notice the appearance of the country much. At one point there stood an old tower—long since swept away, and succeeded by the lodge gate of one of our country magnates, a soldier of some name, who, one would have thought, would not have been so barbarous, as to remove this ancient land-mark of his ances-

tors' warlike propensities—it was one of these larger kind of peel-houses with which the borders are studded, and had stood the attacks of the Scots, and the devastation of time, for many hundred years; and now it has been destroyed to allow of a mock Swiss cottage, or some mediæval absurdity to take its place. Farther on, we came to the curious conical hills of an ancient border encampment, and the low rich vale of the Tweed, in which John's farm lay.

The village of Wark is a very irregular and curious one. Its famous old castle had well-nigh disappeared altogether then, and, indeed, since then has passed altogether out of view. A large green mound, scattered over with cottages, is all that now remains of the strong border keep, so often striven for, in the old riding times. John Ogle's house was at the foot of the green mound,

looking towards the east, and behind it was the well-filled farm-yard, and sluttish hamlet, in which dwelt his hinds, quite separate from the village. The house was a very good one, for the time, and looked the abode of rude plenty and peace. Within there was more order and greater care evident, than I usually saw in the farm-houses around, but I was not surprised at that, for where Jane was there must be order. The kitchen was a large place, with a paved floor, and having depending from its roof, many great flitches of bacon, and hams, in the process of cure. It was here I was to preach; and as we gave our horses to the boy in the yard, we entered the house through it, instead of going round by the front door. I soon saw that it was here that the baptism was to be administered, and that I would be expected to preach a sermon. I always did so when

I could, but the farmers were generally disinclined to have a sermon on such occasions, and therefore when I baptized their children, it was generally only before a parlour or dining-room audience. Jane and John, however, had decided otherwise, and far better, and so the kitchen was set out with forms, so that the whole floor was covered, and preparation was made for a large company. Indeed the people were beginning to gather when we arrived, for there were a few, who lived a good way off, seated by the fire, conversing in low tones to John's servants, and waiting for the assembling of the people near at hand. We passed on into the parlour, where I found two or three neighbours, who had come, as the special guests, to the tea-drinking that always follows a country baptism.

After I had rested awhile—the folk had

seen John and me arrive, and began to flock in to the kitchen, and to take their seats with that gravity for which the Northumberland peasant is distinguished — we went ben to the kitchen. In one corner, near the window, were a few lads who were ambitious to try their hands at conducting the singing, and yet so shamefaced that they were afraid to trust their voices so far, that any audible sound could be heard, and I heard one saying to another: "You'll start, Tam, and we'll follow," and Tam saying: "Man, I'm feared, do you't, Geordie;" and so, to ease them, I said I would do it, for I always led the singing when there was nobody to do it for me, at these country places. Beside the fire the very old people round about were reverently seated, and one very old man, almost entirely deaf, who had not been able to hear sermons for many years, was placed

close to me, that he might not lose a word of what I said. John, and the friends who had come, were placed on my right hand, and a promiscuous company filled the rest of the kitchen to overflowing, only leaving a clear space of a few feet in front of me, which the dogs of the house, and the neighbours who had come to the preaching, soon occupied; the passage even was soon filled up, and I could see, where I stood, only a dim vista of heads where the open door should have been.

Dogs seem to have an ill-will at me, though generally I like them very well, and only the very ill-natured ones bark, when I go to call at any of the houses in the district; but the whole race of them, from the colly Yarrow upwards, have always quarrels when I begin to preach, and so it was on this occasion. We began our worship with a

psalm, which I started and then left the young lads to carry on; while the folk were singing, I could not help noticing that there was a very considerable stir and uneasiness among my canine auditors, before me, and once or twice the whine with which dogs often take it into their heads to accompany music, was just beginning, but was put a stop to by the vigorous kicks with which John and his steward assailed them. It was only when we had finished our devotional services, and while I was in the middle of my sermon, that they fairly broke out. It seems that there was an interloper among them, who had a very bad temper, and it showed itself in a succession of growls, at all and sundry his fellows about him; but just as I had got to what I thought a striking part of my discourse, the rascal started up at my foot and sprang at the throat of an old colly,

belonging to the house, with great ferocity. In an instant the whole canine community was astir, and their barks and growlings completely overpowered my voice, while the two ringleaders were engaged in a manful battle, which took us all so much by surprise that two or three minutes elapsed before order could be restored. I continued standing, though I ceased to speak, and there was the two great sheep-dogs standing on their hind legs, grappling each other by the throat, and growling in the most fearsome way, as they bit and pulled at each other. As soon as the first surprise was over, the shepherd seized his, and the steward the other one by the neck, while some of the other folk laid hold of their hind legs, and after a considerable effort, they were separated, one of them carrying half of the other's ear triumphantly in his mouth, but having the blood

streaming from various wounds in his own head; they were expelled ignominiously, with sundry kicks and cuffs, by different doors to find each other out, if they could, and renew their fight. When quiet was restored, I went on with the sermon, and happily got it finished without further interruption, than a little stir and a few snarls among the younger dogs. I do believe nothing could by any possibility put a Northumberland peasant out of countenance; I was amazed at the *sang-froid* with which they took this interruption, not a smile on any face, not the least stir or word, but only the vigorous action of those nearest, and all was over.

Our baptismal rite is a very simple one; we have no godfathers nor godmothers, we consider the parents as being those to whom the Almighty has intrusted the guardianship

of the child, and, therefore, that they are the only parties on whom the Church can devolve properly the responsibility. After my discourse was ended, I turned to John and one of his hinds, who was going to have a child baptized too, and they both stood up before me, and in the presence of the people; and then I laid the vows on them, and sprinkled the water on the faces of the children. I must confess I did feel a little bashful when I had to call the child Matthewina Paxton; it was not as if it had been the first time either—for the first child I baptized at Hoprig, and also the first at Crookston, were both of them called Mathew Paxton, after me;—and then the services were closed with a special prayer. I should say that the baptism itself is done, in the middle of the prayer, while all the people are standing. I don't at all approve of the new-fangled way of sitting

down, either at prayer, or while the rite is administered.

In the parlour, after the service, there was a little company gathered to tea. I am not one of those who think the Sabbath evening should be passed in gloom, and I did not think there was anything wrong in Mrs. Ogle having a few neighbours after the preaching, and sat down among them, I hope with a pure heart, to pass the Sabbath evening, for I was to stay at Wark all night.

I was introduced to a farmer that night, that I had often heard of, but never seen before. He was an oddity, a very peculiar man, whom the people around said was half-daft. At one time he had been a regular attender at my neighbour Mr. Ayton's Meeting-house, but having taken up strange ideas of the old Jewish law, he had for years

stayed at home, and read his Bible. He fastened himself on me, as soon as we were seated in the parlour, and began to explicate his peculiar notions.

"I'm glad you preached this night, Sir," he said, very solemnly, "and a braw sermon ye gave us, which would have done great good, had it no been for the dougs being so camstary. It's the first I've heard for ten years, and I like to hear the Gospel preached too. How far was a Sabbath day's journey, like what we read of in the Testament, do ye think, Mr. Paxton?"

"Just about a mile, a little more or less, as it might be. First of all, it was the distance, in the camp of the Israelites, between the tabernacle and the tents of the tribe; but to those on the outside of the encampment, it must have been much more than a mile, so that perhaps some of them would

have about two miles to go, to reach the holy place, but after they were settled peaceably in the land, it was just as near about a mile as could be."

"Just that, Mr. Paxton, and that's the reason I hanna heard a sermon for ten years. I found out that from John Brown's Bible, and I canna see that I ought to gang further on a Sabbath day, than was allowed to the Jews lang syne."

"But that was only a ceremonial institution, and was put away as well as circumcision, and many other things, when our Lord came, so that we have nothing to do with what the Jews did, in these particulars."

"Ay, that's what all you priests say, but I never could find out ony place in which it was said sae; and what for should folk no be circumcised now, as well as then, and

have feasts too, and all that the Jews had. It's my opinion, and I have read all the Bible through twelve times, that we should just have the same things now that they had lang syne."

"No, no, Sir, if you look at the Old Testament rightly, you will find that all these ceremonies were intended for a special people, in a special land, and that many of them were typical of these latter and freer times, and that they are not binding upon Christians now."

"I dinna ken; I never could see that, as I was saying; and about the Sabbath day's journey, I canna gang to the kirk, without doing what is wrang, at least that's what I think, for the nearest place is a guid three miles from this, sae I aye stop at hame, and read the Bible; but I would like if I could hear sermon oftener, for I

whiles come on places that fickle me, as they seem to have dune John Brown, honest man, for a' the ficklie bits he passes ower, without a word, while he gies us blads on the easier places; I dinna think that is the right way to do at all."

"A Sabbath day's journey! well, how far is this from your house? I should think it was beyond your measure."

"Sae I thought myself, when our friend John Ogle here telled me ye were to preach; but I measured it myself yesterday, and coming across the fields, it's just about a hunder yards less than the mile, and sae I could come safely, I thought, and no break the law at all."

"But you have forgotten the home going. A Sabbath day's journey was to be just a mile back and forward, and if you go home

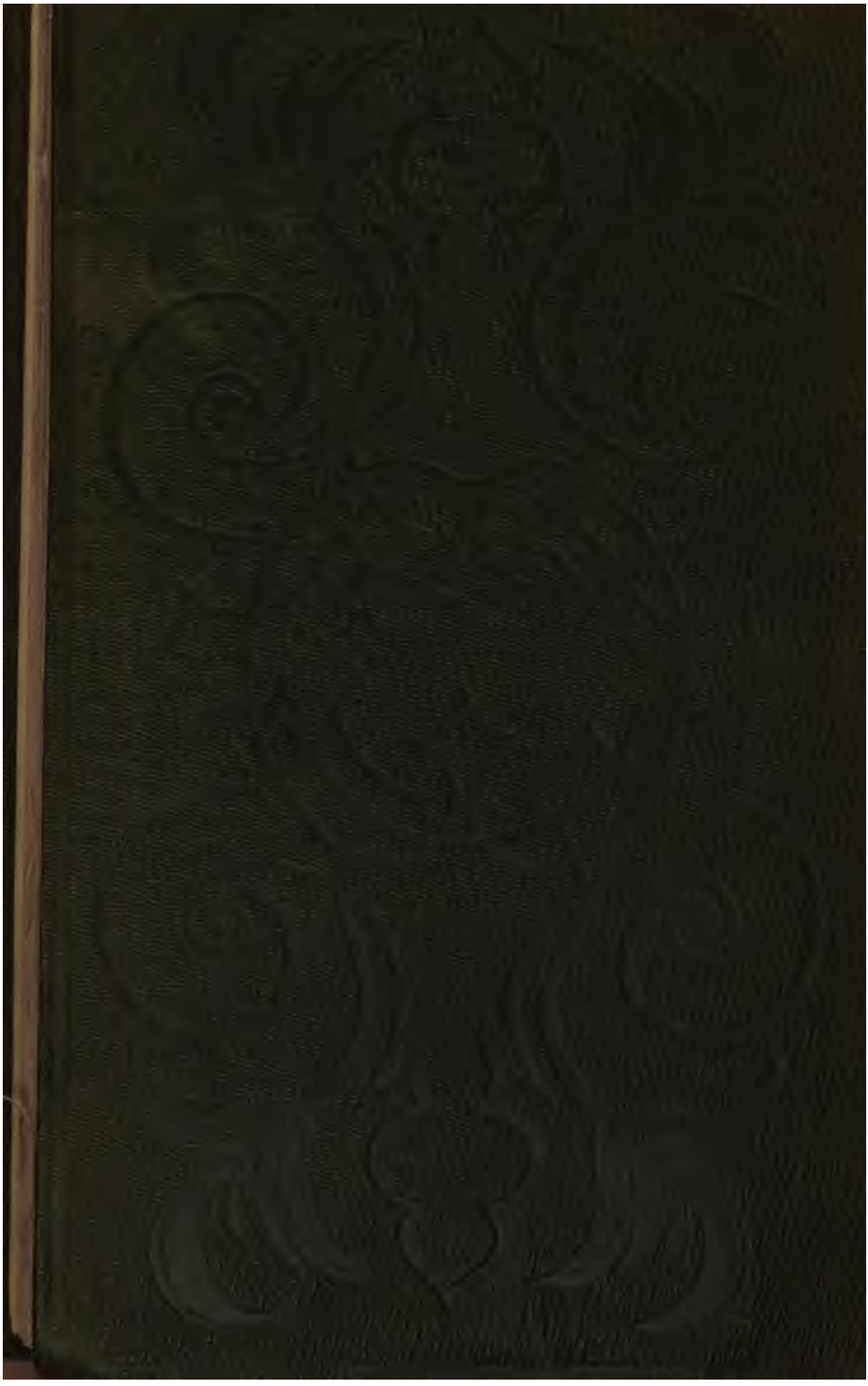
this night, you will just as much break that precept, as if you had come up with John to Crookston."

"Eh me, I didna mind that, I clean forgot that; but I ken what I'll do, I'll no gang hame till the morn, or if Mrs. Ogle will no gie me a bed, I'll wait till twelve, and then gang across to the Common. I dinna ken though that the Sabbath is no past. Lang syne they began to keep the day at the sunset, and ended it at the next sunset, the evening and the morning made the day, and no as we do, so that I am all right yet, and can gang hame this night if I like without breaking the law of the Sabbath."

We sat for an hour or two longer speaking of these subjects to the evident amusement, and I hope profit, of the people round

about. The old man was very peculiar in all his views, and as he looked upon everything in the Scriptures literally, it was no easy matter to agree on almost any point with him. If he had his will, we should soon have have had a Theocracy set up in England, and a temple like that of Solomon in some central place, to which we should all make pilgrimages every year. He would have had our king be like Solomon, or the Grand Turk, in the matter of wives as well, and, indeed, every antique and obsolete Scripture custom revived. Saturday restored to its old pre-eminence as the day of rest; and Priests and Levites, after the old stamp, located in cities all over the land, only if that were possible, with such a New Testament leavening as would make the worship Christian. After we had argued and con-

versed for hours, and after the family worship was over, he took his way home, and left us to the quiet rest of the Sabbath night by ourselves again.

END OF VOL II.

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